

*Abraham
Lincoln*
IN DECATUR



OTTO R. KYLE

ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN DECATUR

by

Otto R. Kyle

Here is a book that should be on the shelves of everyone interested in Lincolniana . . . for it brings forward sidelights on the beloved President's life which have hitherto received scant notice. This is his Decatur story, telling of his youthful coming, and his later dramatic return to that community.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN DECATUR opens with Lincoln, at the age of twenty-one, arriving in the Illinois town with his father's wagon caravan—thirteen persons and their household goods . . . on a raw winter day in mid-March, 1830, late in the afternoon.

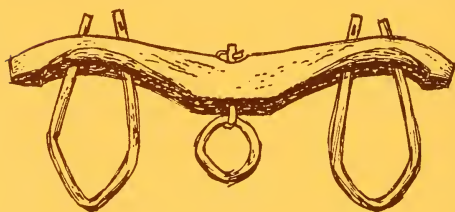
It was not a heartening sight that greeted the eyes of the people in the caravan—only a few log cabins in a small clearing. The sprawling village was but nine months old. Yet in a span of thirty-one years Decatur would see Abe again, this time on his way to the White House to assume his duties as President of the United States.

(Continued on back flap)



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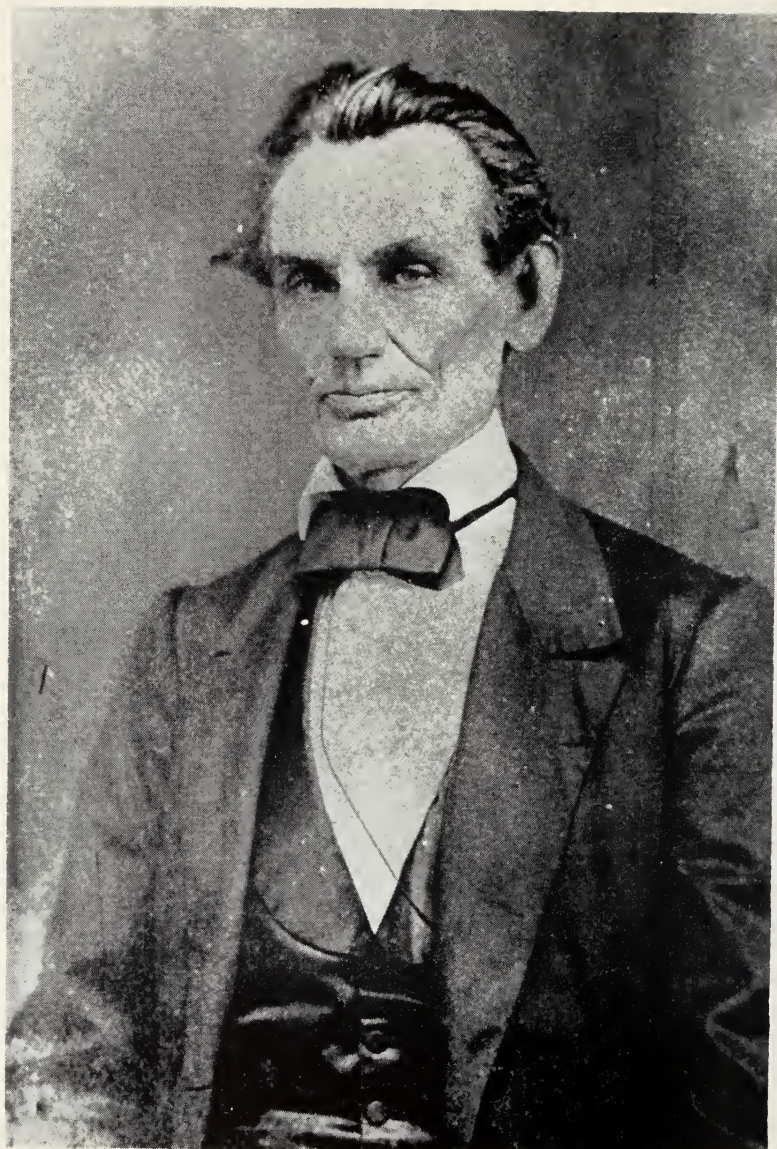
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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

This Barnwell Photograph of Lincoln was taken in Decatur, May 9th or 10th, 1860, while he was attending the Illinois Republican Convention.

Abraham Lincoln in Decatur

By OTTO R. KYLE

Editor of the *Decatur Review* editorial page



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Preface

What justification is there for another book about Abraham Lincoln, even a small book?

Scholars have analyzed every angle of Lincoln's life. They have probed all the byroads and are still finding new subjects that bear an imprint of Lincoln through association with him.

In the numerous biographies only the highlights of Lincoln's Decatur story have been told and these highlights generally have been reduced to bare essentials. Other portions of the story have been told from time to time in magazines and feature articles in newspapers. A goodly portion of the details never have appeared in book or magazine.

It seems worth while to present the Decatur story of Lincoln in complete factual form to fill the vacant niche. No attempt is made to weave a romantic story or to add to the vast personal study that has been made of Lincoln's character and his growth to become President.

It was here in Decatur that Lincoln made his first Illinois home, made his first reported political speech, and met Denton Offutt who took him to New Salem.

It was in Decatur, early in his law career, that Lincoln was opposed in a trial by Stephen A. Douglas, whom he had met in the Illinois Legislature.

Here in Decatur, while riding the circuit, he met Richard

J. Oglesby, one of the original Lincoln men, and it was here that he first publicly associated himself with the organization that grew into the state-wide Republican Party of Illinois.

From William J. Usrey, editor of a Decatur newspaper, he received a letter believed to have helped prompt his challenge to Douglas for the famous debates in 1858.

It was in Decatur that he received the endorsement of the Illinois Republican Convention for President, essential to nomination in the National Convention in Chicago.

In Decatur he received the title of "rail splitter."

Decatur was the scene of events that forever link Lincoln's name with this community and this community with Lincoln's rise to the presidency.

Decatur Illinois

OTTO R. KYLE

Acknowledgments

The original manuscript of this book was born of necessity. As editor of the editorial page of *The Decatur Review* I was confronted with many inquiries for detailed information about Abraham Lincoln's career in Decatur. I suggested to the late Howard C. Schaub, for many years editor and publisher of *The Review*, that a detailed history of Lincoln in Decatur was needed. Mr. Schaub urged me to compile such information.

The late John Valentine, then associated with Ralph Newman in the Lincoln Book Shop in Chicago, encouraged a thorough research and was interested in seeing that the material should be published as a book. I then started on practically a one-man research, which led to the writing of a factual report on Lincoln in Decatur.

The Lindsay-Schaub newspaper files in Decatur were searched, with particular attention being given to the scorched remains of the available *Illinois State Chronicle* files for the years during which that newspaper was published in Decatur while Lincoln was a frequent visitor. Unfortunately, issues of the *State Chronicle* for the important years of 1858 and 1860 are missing.

The University of Illinois permitted me to search its extensive newspaper files. Also, the newspaper files of the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield, Illinois, were

visited numerous times. Freeda B. Franklin, librarian of the Editorial Reference Library of *The New York Times*, was most helpful with her fine research concerning the exhibit of the Lincoln Cabin in New York City.

William E. Baringer and Roy P. Basler, when each was executive secretary of the Abraham Lincoln Association in Springfield, Illinois, as well as Mrs. Marion D. Pratt, also with that association for some time, gave fine assistance and advice. The late Benjamin P. Thomas of Springfield took time to read one of the drafts of the manuscript and gave valuable and needed criticism. Henry Ladd Smith, director of the School of Communications at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, then with the University of Wisconsin, read the manuscript with rewritten chapters and gave helpful suggestions.

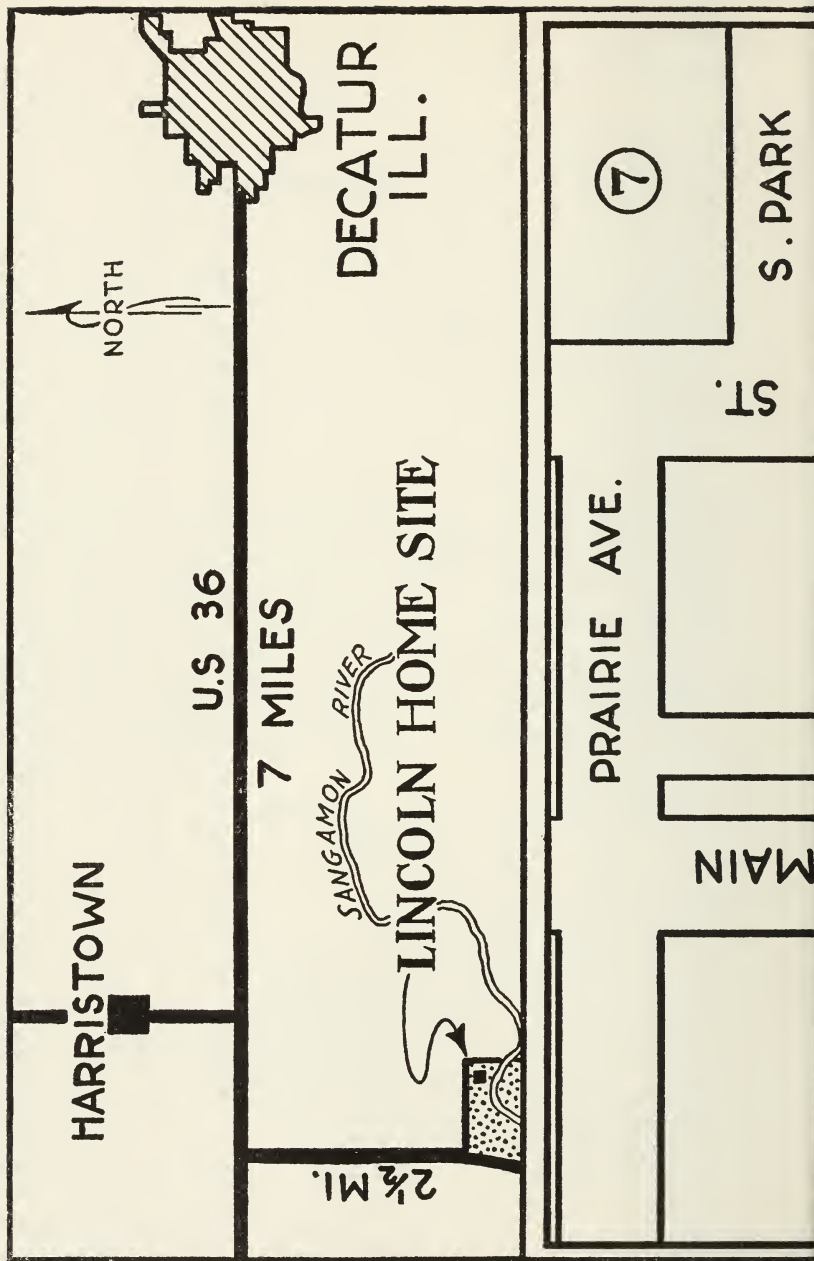
The late Dr. Harry E. Pratt, state historian of the Illinois State Historical Library and secretary-treasurer of the Illinois State Historical Society, not only directed my attention to and provided numerous items of historic interest, but read the final revision of the manuscript a few months before his death, February 12, 1956.

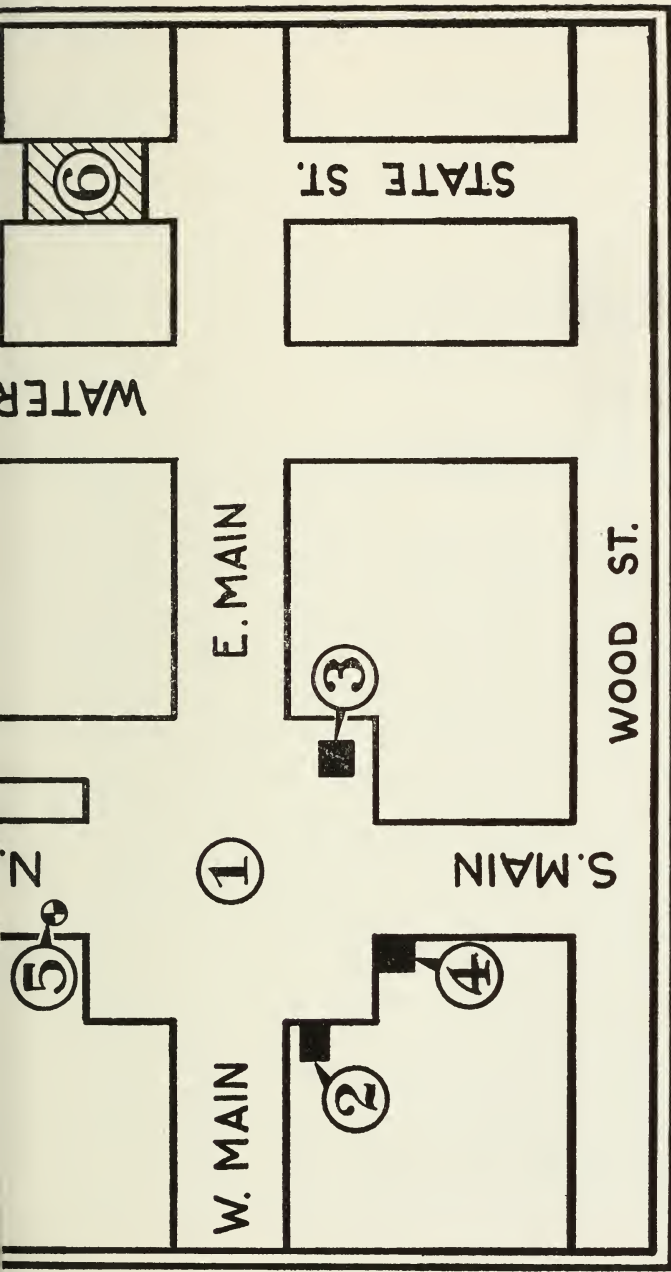
The directors of the Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers Inc., have been most helpful in making it possible that the manuscript appear in book form.

O. R. K.

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—Drawing by Robert A. Walters

LINCOLN SITES IN DECATUR

1. Lincoln Square
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5. Where Lincoln made 1830 speech
6. Site of Wigwam in 1860
7. Central Park



CHAPTER I

The Arrival

“At 21 I came to Illinois . . .”

— Lincoln autobiography
to Jesse W. Fell

Abraham Lincoln's association with Decatur, Illinois, was from the middle of March, 1830, until February 11, 1861 — almost thirty-one years.

During that period, for one year he lived seven miles west of Decatur, his first home in Illinois. In the following years he made numerous visits to Decatur while riding the judicial circuit to attend court and conduct his law practice; came for political gatherings to make speeches; was present at the Anti-Nebraska editors' meeting that laid the foundation for the Republican Party in Illinois; and in the Illinois Republican State Convention he received the endorsement to be the President of the United States.

It was late afternoon in the middle of March, 1830, that wagons containing thirteen persons and household goods jolted into a muddy clearing, surrounded by a few log houses, not far from the Sangamon River in Central Illinois. The Lincoln caravan had been moving slowly for days. Lumbering oxen pulled the lead load, fording streams, squashing through the half frozen mud of trails that wound in and out of patches of timber, then swung wide around swampy-ground, passed through tall, winter-killed prairie grass, and finally mounted a rising slope overlooking the Sangamon Valley.

This was the fourteenth day the group had been on its way. The women and children huddled in the wagons to pro-

tect themselves from the chill of the raw, late winter air. The men trudged beside the wagons. With axes they cleared away the brush where necessary. It was a slow, laborious journey with few signs of habitation, except isolated groups of cabins along some streams, since the caravan crossed the Wabash River on its way westward from Spencer County, Indiana.

As the wagons came to the brow of the hill overlooking the Valley of the Sangamon, Abe Lincoln, tall and dressed in buckskin clothes, shouted at the oxen. Others pointed to a few log cabins as the place they were seeking. But it was only the Ward settlement; Decatur was across the river and a mile north. The caravan crossed the stream and struggled up a muddy hill. The dull gray of evening was settling down, but the end of the journey was in sight.

The wagons creaked to a halt in front of an unfinished log building in a clearing. Nearby, smoke curled from the chimney of one log cabin and other cabins could be seen among the trees. Decatur now calls that muddy clearing Lincoln Square.

There was nothing in the appearance of the ungainly, six-foot, four-inch youth that gave any hint that nearly thirty-one years later he would arrive in Decatur again, this time on his way to Washington to assume the duties as President of the United States. The few persons who gathered around the little group that late, chilly afternoon never dreamed the black-haired young giant, in buckskin trousers and jacket, and wearing a coonskin cap, would become a man of great heart and soul whom the nation would forever revere.

There was nothing in the sprawling nine-months-old village circling the roughly outlined square to give evidence that here would be laid two of the important political stepping stones that would lead Lincoln to the White House. Four city blocks had been staked out. In the center, by taking a corner out of each block, a square had been provided — the square in which the Lincoln caravan halted that fourteenth day of March, 1830, while Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham, made inquiries about a man named John Hanks.

Thomas Lincoln learned that Hanks lived a few miles to the northwest. He wanted to ask him about a place to live. Young Abe, in the meantime, learned that the unfinished log structure before them was to be the courthouse for Macon County. It was located about halfway between the present St. Nicholas hotel and West Main Street on a lot facing the Square.

The development of Illinois had taken place almost within the lifetime of Abe Lincoln. Nine days before he was born in Kentucky, the territory of Illinois was organized by an Act of Congress. When he was living in Indiana at the age of nine, Illinois became a state. In 1830 it was growing rapidly, being settled from south towards the north as settlers came in from Kentucky through Indiana or crossed the Ohio River into Southern Illinois. In 1816 a trading post had been established eight miles northeast of the future Decatur and a thriving business transacted with the Indians until 1826 when the Indians began to leave the vicinity. The last group left in 1828, only two years before the Lincolns arrived.

In the fall of 1820 the first cabin home had been erected south of the river and east of the present Lake Decatur dam. About it grew the Ward settlement. It was at this place that the Lincolns were directed to the new village of Decatur. To the west, Buel Stevens had built a cabin in 1822 near what is now Stevens Creek and about this cabin grew the Stevens settlement.

Few ventured into the prairies, a wilderness of grass six to ten feet tall, dotted with undrained swamps infested with mosquitoes whose bite caused chills and fever. The tough prairie sod remained largely unbroken for another twenty years. No one lived in Austin township of Macon County until 1845, nor in Milam township until 1851.

That was the country represented to Thomas Lincoln as a place of fine timber and prairies, a place of more opportunities than in Indiana.

Two years before the Lincolns joined the procession, a stream of settlers started arriving in Central Illinois. By the

autumn of 1828 it was proposed that a piece of Shelby County be made into Macon County with the result that Benjamin R. Austin, Andrew W. Smith, and John Ward made their way through the prairie grass, swamps, and forests to Vandalia, the state capital, where Ninian Edwards was presiding as governor; the State Legislature consisted of eighteen senators and thirty-six representatives.

As a result of that visit, on January 19, 1829, Macon County, the fifty-fourth county formed in the state, was created by an Act of the Legislature. It embraced a territory twice as large as the present county. The "seat of justice" was to have an area of not less than twenty acres. When the site of that seat of justice was selected it was on ground not yet secured from the federal government, but it was surveyed, the plot approved, and nine months before Abraham Lincoln arrived, the first lot in the village of Decatur was sold.

As young Abe looked about he saw a general store and tavern to the north across the clearing, while near at hand, to the south, was a cabin in which a post office had been established just a week before he arrived. Mail was to come from Shelbyville by a carrier on horseback or by stage. In addition to the unfinished log courthouse, ten or twelve cabins were scattered among the trees. The two streets were filled with stumps.

This was the little settlement of Decatur to which the Lincoln caravan had made its way. In the party were three families — Lincoln, Hanks, and Hall — all related. There were Thomas Lincoln, aged fifty-four; Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, his wife, forty-two; Abraham Lincoln, twenty-one; John D. Johnston, fifteen; Dennis F. Hanks, thirty-one; Elizabeth Johnston Hanks, wife of Dennis, twenty-three; John Hanks, eight; Sarah Hanks, seven; Nancy Hanks, five; Harriet Hanks, four; Squire Levi Hall and his wife, Matilda Johnston Hall, nineteen, and their child, John Hall, two.¹

Whether there were one, two, or three wagons, is uncertain, though it seems likely there were two, perhaps three — for thirteen persons had to have places to sleep and there

were household goods. "Here is the exact spot where I stood by our wagon when we moved from Indiana 26 years ago,"² Abraham Lincoln said to Henry C. Whitney as they stood in the old square in May, 1856. "Our wagon" verifies that Thomas Lincoln owned his own wagon and oxen.

"Their means of progress and conveyance were ox-wagons, one of which Abraham Lincoln drove,"³ said William Dean Howells in a campaign biography of Lincoln published in 1860. When Lincoln later corrected a printed copy⁴ for Samuel C. Parks of Lincoln, Illinois, he did not change the sentence with the plural, "ox-wagons." Lincoln said practically the same thing in a short autobiography written the same year for John Scripps, Chicago newspaper editor: "Their mode of conveyance was wagons drawn by ox-teams, and I drove one of the teams."

Perhaps it makes little difference how many wagons there were but it always has been a point of interest. The executive committee of the Lincoln National Highway Association in reporting to Governor Louis L. Emmerson of Illinois in July, 1929, on the location of the highway for the state of Illinois, without giving the source of its information, described the Lincoln caravan as follows:

"The party traveled from Indiana to Illinois in two wagons. One wagon was drawn by two yoke of oxen and the other was drawn by horses. It is said the other oxen and horses, tied to a wagon, followed. Abraham Lincoln drove the oxen most of the way. The Hall and Hanks families rode in the wagon pulled by the horses. The men walked most of the time and each carried an axe which they used to cut their way through brush, and to build temporary bridges across creeks and sloughs."

Mrs. Harriet Hanks Chapman, who was Dennis Hanks's daughter and four years old at the time she moved with her parents and the Lincolns from Indiana to Decatur, said there were three covered wagons, two drawn by two yoke of oxen each and one drawn by four horses.⁵

Thomas Lincoln "packed his children and sons-in-law

into a single wagon, drawn by two yoke of oxen, the combined wealth of himself and Dennis Hanks and started for the new states,"⁶ report Nicolay and Hay. In Indiana, the Reverend J. Edward Murr talked to Wesley Hall who said he often employed Thomas Lincoln as well as his son, Abraham, in a tan-bark mark and that John Johnston and Abraham Lincoln "obtained one yoke of oxen from the elder Hall,"⁷ but no mention was made of the number of wagons.

The caravan probably came into Macon County on the old Springfield-Paris road, which was little more than a trail, turned north at the present Mount Gilead, almost directly south of Decatur, and crossed the Sangamon River at Ward's ferry.⁸ Lincoln, twenty-six years later, said that as far as he could determine they came in about where the Illinois Central railroad was built.⁹

John Ward was operating the ferry on the north fork of the Sangamon "where the road from Shelbyville to Decatur crosses the same." The toll charges fixed by the county commissioners give an idea what it cost the Lincoln caravan to cross the river: "Footman, $6\frac{1}{4}$ cts.; 1 horse and man, $12\frac{1}{2}$ cts.; 1-horse carriage, $18\frac{3}{4}$ cts.; 2-horse carriage, 25 cts.; 4-horse carriage, 50 cts.; for each additional horse, $6\frac{1}{2}$ cts.; sheep and cattle, 3 cts."

Dennis Hanks, a first cousin of Abraham Lincoln's mother, was ten years old when Abraham was born two miles away from the Kentucky home of Thomas and Betsy Sparrow, who reared Dennis. Betsy Sparrow was Dennis' aunt. A few months after the Lincolns moved to Indiana, the Sparrows, with Dennis, followed and built a cabin near the Lincoln family. Five days after Nancy Hanks Lincoln died of milk sickness, in October, 1818, Thomas and Betsy Sparrow died. Dennis moved in with the Lincolns.¹⁰ For eleven years thereafter Dennis Hanks and Abraham Lincoln were almost constant companions.

Dennis married Elizabeth Johnston, Abraham's stepsister, in 1821 when she was fifteen years old. When they came to Decatur the family consisted of Dennis, his wife, their three

daughters, Sarah Jane, Nancy M., and Harriet, and one son, John.

Squire Levi Hall married Lincoln's other stepsister, Matilda, and they with their son, John, completed the party of thirteen.

The adults of the caravan were anxious to find John Hanks, a cousin of Dennis Hanks and a second cousin of Abraham Lincoln. John Hanks was seven years old when Abraham Lincoln was born and lived forty miles from the Lincoln birthplace. Unlike Dennis, John Hanks did not become well acquainted with his cousin until Abraham was thirteen years old.

In 1822 when John Hanks was twenty-nine years old, he joined the Lincolns in Indiana and lived there until 1826, when he returned to Kentucky and married. Two years later, in the fall of 1828, when the tide of immigration to Illinois was growing rapidly, John Hanks, his wife and two children left Kentucky for Illinois. John's father, William Hanks, Sr., and his uncle, Joseph Hanks, with their families, had left Kentucky for Illinois in the summer, William Hanks settling in Harristown township west of Decatur.

John Hanks came through Spencer County, Indiana, visited the Lincolns and promised Thomas he would let him know about the new Illinois country. When Hanks arrived in the Sangamon River valley there was neither a Decatur nor a Macon County. He went west along the river about eight miles from the present site of Decatur, felled some trees and built a rail shelter which he covered with slough grass.¹¹ He prepared logs to build a cabin later but being unable to break the prairie sod, moved near what is now known as Boiling Springs, four miles northwest of the future county seat of Macon County.

Hanks wrote to Thomas Lincoln, telling him "what kind of a country it was"¹² and urged him to come. Thomas needed little urging. In 1829 there was another outbreak of milk sickness. Every day wagons passed on their way to Illinois. His brother, Mordecai Lincoln, had moved to Hancock

County, Illinois. By November the Lincolns had decided to sell their Indiana farm. In February, 1830, they signed the deed disposing of the eighty acres and by March 1 they were on their way.

The caravan may have camped that first night in Lincoln Square or moved on to the John Hanks's home. As soon as Hanks was found, he suggested as a place for the Lincolns the Sangamon River site he first had selected for himself. It was government land but many settlers had "squatted" on government land intending later to buy it at \$1.25 an acre. There were logs Hanks had cut for the cabin. There was the river, the prairie, and William Hanks, Sr. lived nearby. Thomas Lincoln accepted the suggestion.

CHAPTER 2

Getting Acquainted

“His father and family settled a new place on the north side of the Sangamon River, at the junction of the timberland and prairie.”

— Lincoln’s Short Autobiography to John Locke Scripps

The log cabin home of Thomas Lincoln was erected on a bluff overlooking the Sangamon River at the site John Hanks had first wanted to build his home. John Hanks was there to help Thomas Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln, Squire Hall, Dennis Hanks, and the fifteen-year-old John D. Johnston.

The structure fronted south towards the river three hundred feet away. In the west end were the fireplace and chimney.¹ The logs for the cabin were of hewed timber, the doors and floor of puncheons; the gable and ends were boarded with planks rived from oak; the few nails used had been brought from Indiana. When the cabin was up, a smokehouse and barn were erected.²

Dennis Hanks and Squire Hall “temporarily settled in other places in the county.”³ While Dennis Hanks said he bought a little improvement near Lincoln’s home “six miles from Decatur,”⁴ there is no record of a land entry or a deed in Dennis Hanks’s name in Macon County for the years 1830-31. “Dennis Hanks came out in the summertime,”⁵ John Hanks related, indicating that Dennis may have lived

in or near Decatur. The Hall family seems to have been forgotten except for Lincoln's reference to the "sons-in-law" being temporarily settled elsewhere.

All were squatters. The land on which the Lincoln Cabin was erected was not entered from the government until May 31, 1836, by Perry Strickland,⁶ five years after Thomas Lincoln had moved from Macon County. All three families are listed in the federal census taken the summer of 1830 by William Warnick for the county. Total population of the county was 1,122 of which 638 were less than twenty years of age.

Under "Heads of Families," Thomas Lincoln is shown as having a family of four, with two males between twenty and thirty; one male between forty and fifty, and one female between forty and fifty. Abraham Lincoln was one of the males between twenty and thirty and, presumably, the other was John D. Johnston, which would be an error as he was only fifteen that year. Also, Thomas Lincoln's age listed as between forty and fifty is incorrect, as he was fifty-two.⁷

Dennis Hanks boasted in 1865 that after Abe hauled in the logs for the Lincoln Cabin, he (Dennis Hanks) "hewed them all," and that he helped John Hanks and Abe split rails to enclose about ten acres of land which were broken that summer of 1830.⁸ Rails to fence in the sod corn were honey locust and walnut. Abe was an expert with the ax and maul despite Henry Clay Whitney's doubts about Lincoln's ever having split many rails.

The rails split to surround the corn patch were "far from being the first or only rails ever made by Abraham,"⁹ said Lincoln in his own story of his life. He had learned the art in the Indiana woods¹⁰ and demonstrated it in Illinois when he and John Hanks split more than three thousand rails for William Warnick, sheriff of Macon County, who lived across the river two and a half miles southeast of the Lincoln home.

Lincoln split rails that fall, with George Close as a partner, for James Hanks and William Miller, receiving home-

spun clothing as his pay.¹¹ Lincoln's agreement with Mrs. Miller, who was a sister of John Hanks, was that he receive one yard of homespun brown jeans "richly dyed with walnut bark" for every four hundred rails made until he should have enough cloth for a pair of trousers. Lincoln needed considerable jeans to cover his long legs and it seems likely that he had to split more than one thousand rails, but he needed the trousers. The title, "Rail Splitter," bestowed later, was not a misnomer or just another campaign slogan.

With the home plot fenced, Lincoln started out to find work. The Warnick farm must have been one of the first places at which he was employed, as he helped break prairie that summer, helped with the harvest in the fall, and the next winter split rails for the sheriff. The Warnick farm lay along the Paris to Springfield road, across the road from the later famous Huddleston home, built in 1833,¹² which became known as the "Seven Mile" and "Thirty-three Mile" tavern, since it was seven miles from Decatur and thirty-three miles from Springfield. Lincoln may have stopped there years later while riding the circuit.

Lincoln's stay at the Warnick farm was not without its incidents other than farm work. Robert Warnick, son of the sheriff, was eight years old the summer Lincoln worked there, and before Robert died in 1914 he often told of an incident at harvest time. Perhaps older members of the family provided the details later but he remembered the affair as a tussle between Lincoln and another farm hand.¹³

Grain was cut with reaphooks. Lincoln was long-armed and strong and could hold his own with the best of the reapers. After one round, Jim Herrod was sent for a pail of fresh water. Jim Owens, a big, strong farm laborer, challenged Lincoln to a wrestling bout. Sheriff Warnick gave his consent on condition that neither man become angry. (Both Owens and Lincoln were known as good wrestlers.) Lincoln threw Owens and was holding him down when Jim Herrod returned with the pail of water. Herrod remarked: "I always have heard that when two dogs get to fighting the best way

to separate them is to throw cold water on them." Whereupon he emptied the pail of water on the two men. That ended the match. At the end of the day, said Warnick, Lincoln made a political talk.

The sheriff had an attractive daughter, Mary. The friendship of Abe Lincoln and Mary Warnick is no fable but it seems likely it may have been given more meaning by some writers than actually existed. Joseph Stevens, the man Mary married three months after Lincoln arrived in the neighborhood, boasted he had won the girl from Lincoln. Lincoln probably did not go to the Warnick farm before April, since he did not arrive until the middle of March and there were the cabin and barn to erect at his father's place. It would not have been unusual for young Abe to have been attracted by the daughter of the sheriff of the county but she must have been looking forward to her wedding on June 17 to Joseph Stevens at the time. It is probable that Mary invited Abe to her wedding.

Among other girls in the neighborhood, Lincoln gave some attention to Miss Jemina Hill,¹⁴ in the fall of 1830, when there was a singing and spelling school in a log school-house on the old Springfield road near the present Bethlehem church neighborhood. It was not out of the way to the Lincoln or the Warnick home to see Miss Hill to her home.¹⁵ Miss Hill was not married until five years after Lincoln left the county.

That winter Lincoln spent three weeks in the Warnick home with frosted feet. To reach the Warnick place Abe had to cross the Sangamon River. On one of those daily trips he broke through the river ice. Instead of returning to his own home he continued on to the Warnicks. His feet were badly frosted and Mrs. Warnick used all the home remedies they were accustomed to using in those days to take out the frost-bite. Lincoln made good use of his time there by reading the sheriff's copy of the Illinois Statutes.

Lincoln did not work exclusively on the Warnick farm. He had four yoke of oxen and he broke thirty acres "for my

brother," said John Hanks, as well as breaking prairie for others. Two yoke of oxen belonged to Thomas Lincoln, according to Hanks, and "two to my brother."¹⁶ The brother, Charles Hanks, had a farm in Harristown township. In a letter to John Hanks in August, 1860, Lincoln said: "The year I passed in Macon County I was with him a good deal — mostly on his own place, when I helped him at breaking prairie [*sic*] with a joint team of his and ours, which in turn, broke some on the new place we were improving —"¹⁷

Another of John Hanks's brothers, William Hanks, Jr., owned a farm which is now part of Decatur. He entered eighty acres from the government on March 21, 1829, the land being from Union Street west to Monroe Street, and from Wood Street north to the Wabash railroad.¹⁸ He built a two-room log cabin at what is now 452 West Main Street. When Icabod Baldwin bought the West Main Street property in 1861 the cabin was still there. It was built with hewn walnut logs, some of which were used in the house now on the lot.

Lincoln made the William Hanks's cabin his stopping place when he came into the village and, according to Lincoln legends, he could be seen there in the summertime, propped against a tree, reading a book.

Lincoln was not unknown in the village, for in June or July, 1830, he was called upon to make a speech at a political gathering that was considered important enough to be included in William D. Howells' 1860 campaign biography of Lincoln. In the copy of that biography, which Lincoln personally corrected, he changed nothing in the report of the speech as related by Howells:

"General W. L. D. Ewing, and a politician named Posey, who afterward achieved notoriety in the Black Hawk war, had addressed the freemen of Macon the year previous, 'on the issues of the day.' Mr. Posey had, however, in violation of venerable precedent and sacred etiquette, failed to invite the sovereigns to drink something. They were justly indignant, and persuaded Lincoln to reply, in the expectation

that he would possibly make himself offensive to Posey. Lincoln, however, took the stump with characteristic modesty, and begging his friends not to laugh if he broke down, treated very courteously the two speakers who had preceded him, discussed questions of Politics, and in his peroration eloquently pictured the future of Illinois. There was sense and reason in his arguments, and his imaginative flight tickled the State pride of the Illinoisians. It was declared that Lincoln had made the best speech of the day; and he, to his great astonishment, found himself a prophet among those of his own household, while his titled fellow-orator cordially complimented his performance."¹⁹

John Hanks was there and gave this version:

"After Abe got to Decatur, or rather to Macon County, a man by the name of Posey came into our neighborhood and made a speech. It was a bad one, and I said Abe could beat it. I turned down a box and Abe made his speech. The other was a candidate — Abe wasn't. Abe beat him to death, his subject being the navigation of the Sangamon River. The man, after Abe's speech was through, took him aside and asked him where he had learned so much and how he could do so well. Abe replied, stating his manner and method of reading, and what he had read. The man encouraged him to persevere."²⁰

William Lee D. Ewing and John F. Posey of Fayette County were two of the ten candidates seeking election as state representatives to the Illinois Legislature from the district composed of Bond, Fayette, Montgomery, Tazewell, and Macon Counties. Ewing and Posey were elected August 2, 1830 — Posey receiving fifty-four votes, and Ewing eighty-six, in Decatur.

When L. F. Muzzy, a Decatur city alderman, proposed in 1886 that the "old square" be called Lincoln Square, Captain Joel S. Post approved, saying Abe Lincoln had made a speech in North Main Street only a few feet from the square. Lincoln and some other young men had come to hear the Ewing and Posey speeches, Post related, and after the politicians

had spoken, the crowd insisted that Lincoln talk, choosing his own subject. Captain Post said the subject was "The Propriety of having Slack Water in Navigation, or Improvement of the Sangamon River."²¹

Captain Post did not come to Decatur until 1839, nine years after the speech was made, and if that was the correct subject of the speech he must have obtained his information from others. It would have been possible for him to have learned of it directly from Lincoln, as Post started practicing law in Decatur in 1841, continued until 1846, and then resumed after the Mexican War. Not only did he meet Lincoln in the courtroom in Decatur, but he was associated with him in a number of cases and frequently was with him on the circuit.

Lincoln perhaps had made other speeches in Decatur before this one, for the crowd evidently knew he could talk to audiences. Probably he would not have been urged to speak at the same meeting with Ewing and Posey unless his friends knew he could make a good showing.

When Edwin T. Coleman wrote his *History of Decatur* in 1929 for *The Decatur Review*, he included an account of a Lincoln speech at a time when a General Whiteside was in the village making a political roundup. Coleman said the speech was made in front of Isaac C. Pugh's store on West Main Street. Although Pugh came to Macon County in 1829, his store in West Main Street was not licensed until April 2, 1831, after Lincoln left Macon County.

According to the legend repeated by Coleman, after Whiteside had spoken, some of the younger members of the crowd called for Lincoln. Lincoln spoke on the navigation of the Sangamon, after which Whiteside is reported to have said to Pugh:

"Who is that young fellow?"

"His name is Abe Lincoln, but outside of that I don't know anything about him," replied Pugh.

"He's nobody's d - - d fool and some of these days that fellow is going to be heard of."²²

This obviously is another version of the Sangamon navigation speech made at the time of the Ewing-Posey visit. Election records do not show any man by the name of Whiteside as a candidate for office in or from Macon County at that time. There was a James A. Whiteside elected in 1830 to represent Pope County in the State Legislature and a John D. Whiteside was elected the same year to represent Monroe County. One of these two men may have been in Decatur in the interest of one of the candidates for governor that year but it seems doubtful.

The Lincoln speech for the Ewing-Posey audience probably was given in front of the Renshaw store on North Main Street just off the old square. The tavern was located there and the loafing was done nearby. Legend has it that cards were played on a log in front of the store. Since the election was on August 2, 1830, the speech probably was made in June or July.

Posey may have been impressed by the Lincoln speech as was Mr. Ewing, for in January, 1831, Representative Posey introduced a resolution in the Legislature "that the committee on internal improvements be instructed to inquire into the expediency of opening the navigation of the Sangamon River as far as Decatur in Macon County."²³

CHAPTER 3

The First Year

“After the shake, then came the fever. . . .”
— John W. Smith, *History of Macon County*

Lincoln probably walked the eight miles from the Lincoln home to the village of Decatur as often as he rode horseback. What buying the Lincolns did was at the Renshaw general store. For mail they made inquiry of Postmaster Daniel McCall at the post office in a cabin on the present site of the St. Nicholas hotel on the southwest corner of Lincoln Square. Twenty-six years later Lincoln was to sit in a hotel building on the same site conferring with Anti-Nebraska editors of the state in the formation of a political organization that would develop into the Republican Party of Illinois.

The small amount of mail for the village came from Shelbyville once a week. Ten years later it was said that the postmaster still could carry the “post office” around in his hat. No wonder McCall could also serve as probate judge, circuit clerk, and county clerk while he was postmaster. And in the fall of 1830 he also had time to help take the federal census of the county although it was Sheriff William Warnick who signed the official tabulation. McCall had no courthouse in which to perform the few duties of his various offices but one was being constructed.

The courthouse had been started the previous year on the west side of the square and the Lincoln caravan had stopped in front of it in March. The county had little money to build any kind of a structure as the total taxes for 1829

amounted only to \$109.32½. But a county seat had to have a courthouse and the county commissioners' court stipulated that it should be completed by November 1, 1832.

Lincoln must have inspected the structure inasmuch as his cousin, John Hanks, was doing the chinking and daubing for which he was allowed \$9.87½ in December, 1830. It was a building 18 by 24 feet in size, with a 7 foot ceiling and garret room above. The roof was of clapboard and at one end was a fireplace. The floor was of puncheon (split logs). Planks laid on pins fixed into the wall served as desks. Plain wooden benches provided the seating for public meetings, church services, and court business. There were no county offices in the building, which cost about \$200.

As Lincoln looked about he probably did not realize that eight years later he would be back as a lawyer to transact business in the structure, barely a month before it was to be abandoned in favor of a new brick building. The old building, known as the Lincoln Courthouse, the only remaining link with the early years of Decatur, now stands in Fairview Park.

The first term of Circuit Court in the county opened on May 8, 1830. Although the writs issued in the cases to be heard were returnable at James Ward's home, there is no record that the court was held there. It is possible the first court was held in the unfinished courthouse and it is likely Abe Lincoln was there as he was showing deep interest in law and, in addition, there was a case involving his cousin, John Hanks.

Judge Samuel D. Lockwood, a member of the Illinois Supreme Court, presided and found four cases on his docket: Thomas Cowan vs. Wm. King, appeal; John Hanks vs. John Henderson, slander; Wm. Webb vs. Hubbell Sprague, slander; Wm. Webb vs. Phillip D. Williams, appeal. Court was not in session long. Hanks's slander case was dismissed with Hanks paying the costs. The second slander case also was dismissed with the defendant paying the costs, while the two appeal cases likewise were dismissed.

The second term of court was not until May, 1931, after Lincoln had left Macon County. Among the lawyers present from Springfield at that session was John T. Stuart,¹ who was to be Lincoln's first law partner.

After the first court session the onlookers probably walked north through the square to James Renshaw's general store and tavern to do their shopping and loafing. Renshaw had applied for a license to operate a tavern in June, 1829, for which he paid \$4.00, the county commissioners fixing the following tavern rates:

For breakfast and horsefeed, 37½ cents.

For keeping man and horse each night (the man to have supper and lodging), 62½ cents.

Dinner and horsefeed, 37½ cents.

Brandy, rum, gin, wine or cordial, 25 cents.

Whisky or cider, 12½ cents per half pint.

The first entry in the Renshaw "daybook" made December 10, 1829 (probably the day the store opened), gives credit to William Hanks for 104 pounds of fresh-killed pork at a cent and a half a pound, to be taken out in trade. Even though a big portion of the Renshaw business was barter, he prospered. The names of Lincoln, Hanks, and Levi Hall appear among the customers, and of particular interest are the purchases charged to Thomas Lincoln.

The Lincoln family in coming to Macon County fared no better than other settlers in escaping that body-racking affliction variously called the "ague," "chills and fever," and "Illinois Shakes." Everyone had it. The undrained prairies and lowlands with their swarms of mosquitoes were the cause. By late summer it hit the Lincoln family.² On August 16, 1830, one-fourth pound of "barks" costing \$1.00 was charged to Thomas Lincoln — barks being a "Peruvian bark and whisky tonic" used by all for ague.

The purchase was made "by son," either Abraham Lincoln or John D. Johnston, Abe's stepbrother. On August 28, 1830, there was another charge to Thomas Lincoln for one ounce of barks, this purchase "By Jonson," a misspelling of

Johnston. The first quarter pound of barks had not lasted long and another ounce was needed in twelve days. Someone in the Lincoln family had "the shakes."

Whole families sometimes were sick at once, said John W. Smith in his 1878 history of Macon County. The ague "operated in retarding the rapid settlement of the country," he declared. Smith himself was a victim. Although he writes about it in a humorous vein, he says his description "is no picture of imagination.

"In the fall season of the year, like Brady's bitters, everybody took it," he wrote. "It was no respecter of persons; everybody shook with it, and it was in everybody's system. They all looked pale and yellow, as though they were frost-bitten. It was not contagious, but was a kind of miasma that floated around the atmosphere and was absorbed in the system. It kept on absorbing and accumulating from day to day, until the whole body corporate became charged with it as with electricity, and then the shock came; and the shock was a regular shake, with a fixed beginning and ending, coming on each day, or each alternate day, with a regularity that was surprising.

"After the shake, then came the fever, and this 'last estate was worse than the first.' It was a burning hot fever, and one that lasted for hours. When you had a chill you couldn't get warm, and when you had the fever, you couldn't get cool. It was awkward in this respect. It was indeed. It would not stop, either, for any sort of contingency. Not even a wedding in the family would stop it. It was imperative and exacting. When the appointed hour came around, everything else had to be stopped to attend to its demands. It didn't have any Sundays or holidays.

"After the fever went down, you didn't feel much better. You felt as though you had gone through some sort of a collision, and come out not killed, but badly demoralized. You felt weak, as though you had run too far after something, and then didn't catch it. You felt languid, stupid and sore, and was down in the mouth and heel and partially raveled out, so to speak. Your back was out of fix, and your appetite

was in a worse fix than that. Your eyes had more white in them than usual, and altogether, you felt poor, disconsolate and sad. You didn't think much of suicide, but at the same time you almost made up your mind that under certain circumstances it was justifiable.

"You imagined that even the dogs looked at you with a kind of self-complacency. You thought the sun had a kind of sickly shine about it. About this time you came to the conclusion that you would not take the whole State of Illinois as a gift, and picked up Hannah and the baby and your traps, and went back 'yander' to Injeany, Ohio or old Kaintuck."³

It was not a pleasant welcome to the Lincolns. One of the reasons they left Indiana was to get away from the "milk-sick." Here they found malaria or ague. But that was by no means all that 1830 meant to the Lincoln family and all others in Central Illinois. The winter of 1830-1831 is famous as "the winter of the deep snow."

As winter came on, Lincoln was busy making rails for Sheriff Warnick,⁴ but in mid-December he took time out to appraise an "estrays mare." The records of the county commissioners carry this report:

"We the under signers having been called on to appraise an Estray Mare taken up by Jonathan B. Brown on Monday the 12th day of Dec. 1830; Do find horse to be four years old next Spring a bright bay 14 hands high — a Small blaze and a Snip in her face — right hind foot white — right fore foot with a white Stripe down the hough and white hairs around the edge of the hough no brands preceiveable black mane and tail appraised to 30 Dollars. Given under hands this 16th day of December 1830.

A. Lincoln
John W. Reed"

How much was grown on the little Lincoln farm during the summer is unknown but Abraham Lincoln said they "broke ground and raised a crop of sod corn upon it the same year."⁵ The family had wild game meat; turkeys and deer were plentiful. Because meat could be had merely by going out and getting it, there was no need for killing more

than enough for a day or two or a week at the most. The deep snow, however, kept people indoors and killed much of the wild game.

Numerous statements have been made that Central Illinois never recovered from the destruction of wild game that cold winter, but six years later, in September, 1836, a party of nine hundred Indians was escorted through the Sangamon River valley past Decatur and found so much game it was unnecessary for the conductor to issue government rations.⁶

Throughout the winter of 1830-31 one snow followed another, often with sleet storms between, producing a crust of ice upon which the next fall of snow piled higher. There were many sunless days and as the winter progressed the cold was intense. People did not go out unless it was necessary.

The Lincolns had to have corn. Late in the winter Abe and John Hanks made their way across the Sangamon River to a horse mill owned by Robert Smith⁷ five and one-half miles southwest of Decatur.

Smith had succeeded in getting a road opened to his corn field and with a yoke of oxen hitched to a sled was out gathering corn exposed above the snow when Lincoln and Hanks arrived. Smith asked Lincoln if he had to labor under such conditions on his side of the river, to which Lincoln replied:

"Yes, we have to do worse than that, for we have used up all of our own corn and now we have to go to our neighbors for assistance."⁸

The ague and the fever of the fall had already discouraged the Lincoln family so much that Thomas Lincoln determined to leave the county.⁹ Now the deep snow and the necessity of asking help from neighbors added to the depressed feelings and made Thomas Lincoln more anxious than ever to leave.

Later in the winter, with snow and ice compact, teams and vehicles could be driven over high "stake and rider" fences. Where the snow had not drifted it lay three feet deep in successive layers of ice and snow. There are no reports

of anyone starving or freezing but there were hunger and hardship. In the spring, when the snow melted, the river and streams were high, low lands were covered with water and roads were nearly impassable. Difficult travel conditions, however, did not prevent a Kentuckian named Denton Offutt from reaching Decatur.

Offutt arrived in February seeking John Hanks, who had operated flatboats from Kentucky down the Ohio and Mississippi to New Orleans. Offutt was an enterprising and enthusiastic fellow and hoped to make money taking products out of the developing Illinois country to the South. Later it developed that Offutt was boastful and impractical but he had a knack of making friends.¹⁰

As Hanks told about the venture later, Offutt "wanted me to go badly. I went and saw Abe and John Johnston, Abe's stepbrother; introduced Offutt to them. We made an engagement with Offutt at 50 cents per day and \$60 to make the trip to New Orleans."¹¹

Lincoln, Hanks, and Johnston started down the Sangamon River in a canoe in March, 1831.¹² Lincoln had lived in Macon County just a year. He was starting out in the world to make his own way. The trip was made to New Orleans, but Lincoln and Hanks differ in reports of the return home from St. Louis. According to Hanks, he, with Lincoln and Johnston, walked from St. Louis to Edwardsville where Hanks left them and went on to Springfield, while Lincoln and Johnston went to Coles County.¹³ Lincoln said that Hanks went only as far as St. Louis for "having a family, and being likely to be detained from home longer than at first expected, and turned back from St. Louis."¹⁴

As to his own action after returning from New Orleans, Lincoln said his father and family and others had removed from Macon to Coles County and that "John D. Johnston, the stepmother's son, went to them, and Abraham stopped indefinitely, and for the first, as it were, by himself at New Salem."¹⁵ Lincoln, nevertheless, visited his father's new place at Goose Neck Prairie in Coles County.¹⁶ He probably went through Decatur late in July, 1831,¹⁷ on his way to rejoin Offutt in New Salem.

CHAPTER 4

The Log Cabin

After Thomas Lincoln moved to Coles County, Illinois, in the spring of 1831, the Lincoln cabin overlooking the Sangamon River in Macon County was left for anyone who wished to use it. In 1860 it was used for a schoolhouse for several weeks after a school district had been divided.¹

In April, 1865, John and Dennis Hanks decided to exhibit the cabin at the Sanitary Fair in Chicago. They, with Dennis Hanks's son-in-law, James Shoaff, took the cabin down, numbered each log, and shipped them to Chicago. The decayed logs were replaced by logs from John Hanks's own log barn. In Chicago the cabin was set up at Randolph Street and Wabash Avenue where it was visited by hundreds from June 1 to 24. As a sideline, John Hanks sold canes which he said were "made from rails that Lincoln split."

The cabin received thousands of words of publicity from the time it arrived in Chicago. It had not yet been set up on May 29 when the *Chicago Tribune* under a heading, "The Lincoln Log Cabin," said:

"The identical log cabin, built by Lincoln and John and Dennis Hanks, in the days of their rail-splitting, about twelve miles west of Decatur, Macon City, Ill., has been brought to this city for exhibition during the Fair, and will be placed on the corner of Randolph street and Wabash avenue. It will be open to inspection tomorrow. The Messrs. Hanks

will be in attendance and give interesting items of their experience with Lincoln in the days — ‘Auld Lang Syne.’ The following letter of identification from our noble Governor Oglesby will be read with much interest:

‘State of Illinois, Executive Dep’t,
Springfield, May 20, 1865

‘John Hanks, Esq., Decatur, Ill.:

‘My Dear Old Friend — In reply to your question relating to the log cabin, said to have been built by yourself, Thomas Lincoln and the late President, Abraham Lincoln, I take pleasure in stating to you that for twenty-five years there has been no doubt in the public mind in Macon county, Illinois, on this question. If the cabin you now have is the one you pointed out to me in the spring of 1860, when you were collecting the Lincoln rails, I cheerfully state that I am certain it is the one built by Mr. Lincoln; besides your voluntary statements on the subject abundantly satisfy me there can be no mistake about it.

‘As the old companion and friend of Mr. Lincoln, and one who has been constant in your support of his administration, and an adopted friend of the Union, I hope you may receive a just compensation for your efforts to bring before the country the simple but honorable testimonies in the early, laborious and worthy efforts of our beloved President in his youth, to make for himself a home, a fortune and a name.

‘The Log Cabin would be out of place in any other hands than your own. You should retain control of it, that its identity may not be lost. There is but one such in the United States, and it rightfully and properly belongs to you.

‘(Signed) RICHARD J. OGLESBY,
Governor of Illinois’ ”²

The next day the Fair’s own publication, *The Voice of The Fair*, told about the cabin and a razor to be exhibited, saying in part regarding the cabin: “Messrs. Shoaff & Hanks have certificates from James Whitley, Esq., the gentleman from whom they purchased it, and also Gov. Oglesby and

Col. Pugh, stating that it is really the identical Cabin referred to.”³

On the following day, June 1, the *Chicago Tribune* started a long article with the statement that “Abraham Lincoln’s log cabin, which he helped to build with his own hands, in the days of his youth and poverty, is to us the most outstanding of all the objects at the Fair.”⁴ Through *The Voice of The Fair* it was announced that John Hanks proposed to donate half of the receipts to the Sanitary Fair which was being held to raise funds to aid soldiers. On June 8 the Fair’s publication printed its last article about the cabin, saying in part:

“Governor R. J. Oglesby paid his respects to the old cabin on Monday, and when he entered its enclosure, taking John Hanks by the hand, exclaimed, ‘Well, John, this is certainly the identical Lincoln cabin. I have been in it many years ago. My feelings are sad. I realize where I am.’

“After the Fair, we understand, the Messrs. Hanks intend removing it to New York, where it will be placed on exhibition. From thence it will go to Boston. Those who fail to visit the cabin will lose one of the best parts of the Sanitary Fair.”⁵

From Chicago the cabin was shipped to Boston and exhibited on Boston Common from late July, 1865, through August, after a permit had been granted by the Board of Alderman. The official record of the permit says:

“At a meeting of the Board of Aldermen of the City of Boston, held in Mechanics Hall, on Monday, the tenth day of July, Anno Domini, 1865.

“Agreeably to the reports of the Committee on Licenses and Common, leave was granted to John Hanks to exhibit President Lincoln’s original log cabin on Boston Common.”⁶

Several days later a small item under the heading: “The Original Lincoln Cabin,” appeared in *The Liberator* (Boston) saying:

“The original Lincoln Cabin, which he helped to build in Macon County, Illinois, in 1830, is to be exhibited on

Boston Common. The identity of the structure is fully established. It was exhibited at the recent Sanitary Fair in Chicago, and was visited by thousands.”⁷

Among the visitors to the cabin in Boston were the Marquis of Drogheda and his lady. The Boston *Advertiser* captioned its story of the event, “The English Nobility in the Lincoln Log Cabin,” saying:

“The Marquis of Drogheda and his lady, who are in the city, stopping at the Tremont House, paid a visit last evening to the ‘Lincoln Cabin,’ which is now on exhibition on the Common. They spent some time in the examination of this now sacred relic; and, while purchasing some articles made from the wood of the cabin, her ladyship remarked: ‘I wish very much to take home these to show our people; for my husband is one of those in our country who admired President Lincoln’s character.’

“On taking their leave the Marquis and his lady shook hands in a very cordial manner with Uncle John Hanks, who helped build, and now owns and exhibits the cabin, and said to him: ‘We are very happy indeed to take the hand of the old friend and companion of Mr. Lincoln.’

“Although persons of high rank and large fortune, they came and went in a quiet, democratic way, and ‘Uncle John’ was not aware, until after their departure, that he had been entertaining the English nobility in the humble log cabin which he helped young Abe Lincoln, the rail splitter, build over thirty-five years ago. But such was the case. The distinguished visitors, however, honored themselves no less than the humble cabin by the respect which they paid to our martyred President’s memory.”⁸

The final word on the Boston showing of the cabin came in the Boston *Advertiser* on Aug. 1, 1865, when it said “a visit to the cabin is time well spent.”⁹ Business in canes had been so good that John Hanks wrote home for many of the rails from which to make them. There is grave doubt that many of the rails from which the canes were made ever were split by Abe Lincoln.

The next word heard about Hanks and his cabin was from New York City when P. T. Barnum prepared to open his new museum in the autumn of 1865. The Lincoln Cabin was to be a feature. Barnum's museum at the corner of Broadway and Ann Streets was destroyed by fire. While making plans for the erection of a new museum, Barnum leased a building at 539-541 Broadway, built a theater in it and five exhibition saloons or lecture rooms.

The New York Times generously gave Mr. Barnum a half-column article about his museum on the morning it was to open and referred readers to the Barnum advertisement which was a single half column jammed with type about the attractions, the name of the theatrical company, and the special artists. Admission to the museum and lecture rooms was thirty cents. No mention was made of the Lincoln Cabin in that advertisement of September 6, 1865, but by September 18 Barnum had finished a sixth saloon and in this room was exhibited the Lincoln Cabin along with glass blowers, giants, a fat woman, and other exhibits. The main portion of the advertisement referring to the cabin said:

"A sixth saloon has just been added in which is exhibited the IDENTICAL LINCOLN LOG CABIN built by ABRAHAM LINCOLN in Macon County, Illinois, in 1830, and in which he resided for two years.

"Original letters from Gov. R. J. Oglesby of Illinois, Gov. Andrew of Massachusetts, and other distinguished personages prove the identity of this historic relic, made sacred for having been touched by that once powerful but now motionless hand. The Common Council of Boston granted the use of the Common for its exhibition. John Hanks of Illinois, who assisted Mr. Lincoln in its erection, will be in the cabin to answer all questions."¹⁰

The museum program was changed on October 30 and the cabin was moved out. Where the cabin went is unknown. No newspaper reference has been found about its being exhibited or stored. There are only a few scattered copies of Decatur newspapers of that period now existing. From the one news-

paper item found about the movements of John Hanks it appears the cabin was to have been exhibited in Philadelphia after New York City. This item in the *Decatur State Chronicle* in early November, 1865, said:

"The Lincoln cabin is now on exhibition in New York, and will shortly be taken to Philadelphia, after which it is the purpose of the proprietors to exhibit it in Europe. John Hanks left for the east yesterday, and will accompany the cabin to Europe. As the early companion of Mr. Lincoln he will form an interesting feature of the exhibition."¹¹

No newspaper reference has been found about the cabin being exhibited in Philadelphia. And John Hanks never went to Europe, although Gov. Richard J. Oglesby wrote him a letter wishing him a safe and pleasant journey and saying that he hoped Hanks would not fail to return the cabin to Decatur. An unconfirmed report is that the cabin was sold to an Englishman and was lost in transit to England.

The disappearance of the Macon County Lincoln home is similar to that of his home in Spencer County, Indiana. It is not definitely known what happened to the Indiana cabin but it supposedly was shipped to Cincinnati, Ohio, and the logs made into relics.¹²

The land on which the Lincoln Cabin was built in Macon County was entered from the government by Perry Strickland, May 31, 1836, and sold by him in 1843 to James Whitley and his brother, Shelton G. Whitley. The tract is half of Section 28 in Harristown Township. When James Whitley died in 1872, a son, Richard, sold his half section to Thomas J. Scroggin. It was on this portion of the land that the Lincoln Cabin had been located.

The Whitley family moved to Missouri and after a few years returned to Decatur. James Whitley, a son of Richard, bought back the land his father had sold. Eventually the State of Illinois purchased sixty acres containing the cabin site, and a 200-foot parkway now connects the site with Federal Route 36 west of Decatur. No home ever has been on the ground since the Lincoln Cabin was removed.

CHAPTER 5

Always a Whig

"Always a Whig in politics. . . ."

— Abraham Lincoln

Autobiography to Jesse W. Fell

Abraham Lincoln did not vote in the August 2, 1830 election in Macon County since he met only two of the three requirements of a qualified voter. He had "attained the age of 21" and he had "not voted in this election" but he had not lived in the state six months.

Although he did not vote he did get on the record illegally, in the changing of a voting precinct. When a number of voters wanted to change the location of a voting place they took around a petition addressed to the county commissioners and secured signatures, the petition reading:

"We the undersigned qualified voters in Decatur Precinct earnestly request your honors to change the present place of holding Elections in said precinct from Parmenius Smallwood's to the Court House in Decatur."

The petition was dated May 26, 1830. "Honest Abe" probably never noticed the words *qualified voters*, and with a big scrawl signed his name, "A. Lincoln," after that of John D. Johnston, Lincoln's half brother, also an unqualified voter. Lincoln's name was the forty-fifth and last on the list. The county commissioners evidently were not particular about the signers and the petition was granted on June 7, 1830.¹ The state law permitted county commissioners to change a voting place at any time "upon the petition of a majority of voters residing within the precinct." The petition Lincoln signed had a bare majority.

Macon County in 1830 was Democratic as was the state as a whole. The county remained that way throughout Lincoln's political life, despite the numerous speeches he made in Decatur as a Whig presidential elector or as a candidate for the Senate. Macon County never had a representative in the State Legislature or in Congress of the same party affiliation as Lincoln while he was a member of those two legislative bodies.

In the presidential election of 1832, Macon County cast 173 votes for Andrew Jackson, Democrat, and only 41 votes for the Whig candidate, Henry Clay.² Twelve years later, in 1844, the county honored a local Whig, George Powers, by giving him more votes for state senator than were given the Democratic candidate. Otherwise the county remained consistently Democratic for many years, including Lincoln's first election to the presidency.

Lincoln left Decatur in the spring of 1831. In the summer of 1832, he returned to New Salem from the Black Hawk War, and sought election to the Illinois General Assembly from Sangamon County. He was defeated. In submitting his candidacy he continued to advocate the improvement of the Sangamon River as he had done in his speech when Ewing and Posey were in Decatur in 1830. A railroad had been proposed to run from the Illinois River through Jacksonville to Springfield and in his bid for election, Lincoln said:

"The probable cost of this contemplated railroad is estimated at \$290,000; the bare statement of which, in my opinion, is sufficient to justify the belief that the improvement of the Sangamon River is an object much better suited to our infant resources."³

In 1834 Lincoln again was a candidate for the Legislature from Sangamon County and this time was successful, as he was in three succeeding elections. In 1834, Thomas B. Trower of Macon County was elected to the Ninth General Assembly to serve in the House with Lincoln. In 1836, William G. Reddick of Decatur was elected and in that year Lincoln was chosen by Whig members to direct party poli-

tics, the House consisting of twenty-seven Whigs and sixty-four Democrats.⁴ In 1838, Reddick, a Democrat, was returned to the General Assembly but died soon after the election and in a special election Jesse Wilson Gouge of Macon County was elected.

By this time Macon County had become reacquainted with Abraham Lincoln. He had completed requirements on March 1, 1837, to practice law, and in May, 1838, came to Decatur, now a town of three hundred, for the first time as a lawyer.

In 1840 when Lincoln was re-elected from Sangamon County for what was to be, by his own choice, his final term in the Legislature, Robert F. Barnett of Macon County was elected to the General Assembly. Lincoln was not only a candidate for the Legislature but, as a member of the Whig State Central Committee, had the practical management of the Whig forces in the state in the campaign to elect William H. Harrison to the presidency.⁵

As presidential elector and an active campaigner, Lincoln undoubtedly was in Decatur on political as well as law business. Macon County cast 627 votes — 377 going to Martin Van Buren (Democrat) and 250 to Harrison (Whig). In the Legislature, Lincoln was the minority leader and the Whig candidate for Speaker of the House, which had forty Whigs and fifty-one Democrats as members. W. L. D. Ewing received forty-six votes, and Lincoln received thirty-six. Lincoln was contesting with the man he had met in Decatur in the summer of 1830 when Lincoln, as a farm hand, had made a speech in front of the Renshaw store.

Lincoln was again a Whig presidential elector in 1844 and active in the campaign. A Whig mass meeting was called for October 9 in Decatur, featuring a public barbecue and the erection of an "ash pole" in honor of Henry Clay.⁶ The speakers for the day were to be Stephen T. Logan and Abraham Lincoln of Springfield, and David Davis of Bloomington.

The call had been signed by Henry Sheppard, chairman; George A. Smith, J. H. Triplett, Preston Butler, Benjamin

Dillehunt, Luther Stevens, Anson Packard, W. Sanders, W. J. McCondeU, James Renshaw, Edmund McClellan, Charles H. Pringle, W. Renshaw, and Benjamin F. Oglesby. There was no published report later to show whether Lincoln was present but he probably filled the engagement as announced. In the election that year Macon County gave James K. Polk (Democrat) 328 votes and Henry Clay (Whig) 221 votes for President. This was the year in which Macon County gave George Powers (Whig) 301 votes as compared with 277 for Samuel G. Nesbitt (Democrat) in the state senatorial election.

In 1846 when Lincoln was a successful candidate for representative in Congress from the seventh congressional district, Macon County was in the third congressional district, composed of eighteen counties. The district cast 11,757 votes, with Orlando B. Ficklin (Democrat of Coles County, who went to Congress with Lincoln) defeating Robert K. McLaughlin, an independent, 6,707 to 5,014. Macon County gave Ficklin 281 votes and McLaughlin, 155.

CHAPTER 6

Lawyer Lincoln

"Nor is it adequate to refer to Lincoln as a country lawyer. In the forties and fifties he was one of the outstanding lawyers of Illinois at a time when Illinois was a populous and flourishing state, well supplied by able lawyers."

— J. G. Randall

Seven years after young Abe Lincoln set forth from Macon County in a canoe on the swollen Sangamon River in March, 1831, to work for Denton Offutt, he returned to Decatur. He was not the rail-splitting, oxen-driving farm hand the loafers about the Renshaw store and log courthouse had known when the lanky Lincoln came into town during the summer of 1830. It was as a lawyer that he returned.

Lincoln had been issued on September 9, 1836, a license to practice law but he did not complete full requirements until March 1, 1837, when his name was enrolled as an attorney.¹ He had been taken in as a partner by John T. Stuart of Springfield in April, 1837,² becoming a member of one of the leading law firms in Springfield.³ Lincoln was busy that year in the State Legislature from January through March and again in July, in addition to handling law business in Springfield.⁴

In the spring of 1838 he started attending court in the First Judicial Circuit composed of Macon, Livingston, McLean, Tazewell, Sangamon, Cass, Morgan, Calhoun, Greene, and Macoupin counties. Available records indicate Decatur probably was the third city that he visited on that circuit.⁵ How he traveled that first year is just a guess but it probably was by horseback since most of the lawyers traveled across country that way.

"After a few years," said George P. Davis, son of David Davis, "my father, who was a circuit judge, and Mr. Lincoln were able to afford a buggy."⁶ Riding horseback was the surest way of getting over the miserable roads, which were often nearly impassable.

In the middle of May, 1838, Decatur was in all the lushness of spring. Ox-teams were at work in the fields and as Lincoln neared the village, which he remembered as having a dozen or two log cabins, a combination tavern and store, and a small log courthouse, he must have noted how the town was spreading out. Renshaw's store, which was doing about \$10 worth of business a day back in the summer of 1830, was now doing business at the rate of \$500 a month, of which \$100 was in cash. Across the square was Cantrill's general merchandise store, and on South Main Street was another new store in a brick building.

Harrell's tavern, in what is now Central Block, was the popular inn. The county had a population of more than 3,000 with nearly 300 living in Decatur. Just two years before, Decatur had ceased to be a village and had become a town, electing its first board of trustees.

What must have caught Lincoln's eye and pleased him most was the new brick courthouse in the southeast corner of the old square. Here Lincoln was to handle many cases and speak often at political gatherings during the next twenty-two years. But it was not ready for use on this first visit of lawyer Lincoln.

The old log courthouse was still standing but it had served its purpose and was to be abandoned in a few days. The leading citizens had said two years before that the building with its plank side-wall desks, rough benches, and no offices, was not a credit to the growing village. What Decatur needed, they argued, was a building of brick that would show the progress of the town and would be a suitable place in which to conduct the business of the county.

The county commissioners agreed and in January, 1837, named a commission to make arrangements for such a court-

house. By March the contract had been let to Leander Munsell who was to erect a two-story structure of brick to cost \$10,625 and be finished in eighteen months. It was to be 40 feet square and 32 feet high with a cupola to house a bell weighing 120 pounds, and a lightning rod was to adorn its top.

There was the courthouse "in" the square, set back ten feet from the projected lines of South Main and East Main Streets. There were four rooms on the first floor — one in each corner for county offices — and on the second floor was the courtroom with two smaller rooms, one a jury room and the other the sheriff's office. The courtroom had a partitioned space for the lawyers and benches for the public. It was an elegant structure for an eight-year-old county.

This was the building Lincoln saw in May, 1838, as he rode into town. It stood out in sharp contrast with the lowly log structure on the west side of the square in front of which the Lincoln-Hanks-Hall families had stopped that March day in 1830. But the May term of court was being conducted in the old building with Jesse B. Thomas presiding as judge.⁷

Lincoln's first court business in Decatur was on May 14, 1838, when he wrote a bond for costs in the case of Little Berry Noe vs. James Cunningham.⁸ It appears that Noe had a bill against Cunningham for thirty-seven head of hogs, a bay mare, washing and lodging, and some other items. The case first came up on October 3, 1837, with Stuart and Emerson, lawyers for the plaintiff, and Davis and Baker for the defendant. Now Lincoln was Stuart's law partner and he was in Decatur looking after their cases.

That evening Lincoln went out in a big wagon to the John Hanks home. Hanks had driven in that morning with his wife and Mrs. Willis Johnson since Hanks was to serve on the jury. Hanks had to remain with the jury overnight.⁹

"There were two things I remember especially about the visit of Lincoln," Mrs. Johnson said in 1909, "that he ate a hearty supper and the splendid clothes that he wore. He had venison for supper that night. That was common at that time

for when Johnny Hanks wanted fresh meat he went to the woods with his rifle and either shot a deer or a wild turkey, maybe both. Lincoln evidently was fond of venison for he ate heartily.

"His clothes were made of blue mixed Kentucky jeans, pants, coat and vest, and there was a leather strap fastened under his instep to hold his trousers down. The clothes were tight-fitting but at the time it seemed to me that his suit was the most handsome thing in men's clothing that I had ever seen. I could not say positively, but to the best of my recollection, at that time Lincoln did not wear a beard.

"I remember too, that on the way to town next morning we passed the site of the old school house which had been burned, maliciously, we believed at that time. Lincoln commented on the burning of a house and when I told him that it had been a school house and that all our books had been burned, he said that it was a shame that any one would set fire to a school house when school houses were so few and were so badly needed as they were here at that time.

"I don't remember who hitched the team to the wagon the next morning but after breakfast Mrs. Hanks told me to get into the wagon and we would take 'that lawyer' back to town. There were no seats for the wagons in those days. We put chairs in for seats. Each of us had a split-bottom chair. Lincoln sat in front and drove the team. When we crossed Stevens Creek there was quite a chug into the stream and he did not make any attempt to hold back the team or to brace himself against the fall of the front wheels and he came near to pitching headlong out of the front of the wagon. Mrs. Hanks made fun of him for not being able to drive better than that."¹⁰

In that day's session of the court Lincoln was appointed guardian *ad litem* of the infant heirs of John Lowry and on June 5, twenty days later, Lincoln's answer to a petition to dispose of real estate in the case was filed. This answer is one of the historic documents of Macon County:

"The answer of Abraham Lincoln, guardian ad litem of

the infant heirs of John Lowry, deceased, to a petition filed in the Macon Circuit Court by John Lowry, Administrator for the estate of the said John Lowry, deceased, praying for a sale of the real estate of the said deceased.

"This respondent for answer to the above named petition states that he knows of no good reason consistent with the interests of the said infant heirs why the prayer and petition should not be granted.

A. Lincoln, Guardian ad litem."¹¹

A month after Lincoln had concluded his cases in the old courthouse, Leander Munsell, contractor for the new courthouse, turned it over to the commissioners' court, which examined and accepted it, and on the same day named Henry H. Gorin agent to rent the log courthouse.

A large portion of Lincoln's business concerned guardianships, notes, slander, and the ordinary run of civil cases. Court met twice a year but after appearing in the Macon County court from 1838 through 1840, Lincoln's name is missing from the records for nine years and reappears next in June, 1850, and thereafter in cases through 1858. Lincoln was in Decatur for the spring term of court in 1859 but no case carries his name.

Lincoln had begun his court practice in the First Judicial District but the creation of many new counties made it necessary to divide the district and on March 2, 1839, the eighth judicial district was created consisting of Macon, DeWitt, McLean, Livingston, Tazewell, Menard, Logan, Sangamon, and Dane (Christian) counties.

In June, 1839, Lincoln was an attorney in one of the most interesting cases, although probably not the most important, of his career as a lawyer in the Macon County Circuit Court. David Adkins was suing Robert Hines for slander, the case being one of six¹² in which Adkins was involved then or later, all of which were apparently connected in some degree.

Various court papers filed in the cases show (1) a charge that Adkins stole hogs from George Deeds and David Stutes-

man in March, 1838; (2) a charge that Adkins stole hogs from John G. Deeds in September, 1838; (3) a slander suit by Adkins against Robert Hines; (4) a slander suit by Adkins against Levi Meisenhelter; (5) a suit charging that Adkins and Meisenhelter had a pre-arranged "affray" or "fight by agreement"; and (6) a slander suit by Adkins against George Deeds.

Lincoln was involved in at least three of the cases but the most important was the Adkins vs. Hines slander case, as in this case there was an array of legal talent such as Central Illinois had seldom, if ever, seen. It all started with the charge that Adkins "did feloniously steal, take and carry away certain goods and chattels, towit, five pigs and five hogs of one George D. Deeds, of great value, towit, of the value of fifty dollars," also five pigs and five hogs worth \$50 from David Stutesman on the same day.¹³ Later Adkins was accused of stealing hogs in September, 1838, from John G. Deeds.

The Adkins cases became complicated when, on November 19, 1838, William Webb appeared before Charles Emerson, justice of the peace, and charged that "David Adkins and Levi Meisenhelter did on the 17th day of November, 1838, between the hours of 4 and 6 p.m. fight by agreement in a public place to the terror of the citizens." Whether the "affray" was a fight with fists or other weapons is not mentioned.

Four days later, on November 23, the case of "People vs. David Adkins" arising out of the "affray" was tried in Emerson's Justice of the Peace Court with Shelton G. Whitley, George W. Querrey, Luther Stevens, James F. Montgomery, Landy Harrell, and Jesse W. Gouge as a jury. Adkins was acquitted but William Webb, who had filed the complaint, appealed to the Circuit Court and George R. White gave bond to cover costs.

Justice Emerson was directed to send all papers in the case to the Circuit Court and Adkins was summoned to appear on the first day of the next term.

While William Webb was charging in the Justice Court that Adkins had staged a fight, Adkins made affidavit before

Henry M. Gorin, circuit clerk, that he was going to bring suit for \$2,000 damages for slander against Robert Hines who "did on Nov. 17, 1838, speak words false and malicious. . . ." Adkins had Hines put under bail of \$1,000 for which George Deeds went security.

Kirby Benedict, one of Decatur's most prominent lawyers, who later became Chief Justice of New Mexico Territory, wrote the declaration in the Adkins-Hines slander case, charging that on November 17, 1838, Hines had used strong language repeatedly to Adkins in charging that he had stolen pigs.¹⁴

Called to assist in the case in behalf of Adkins was another man who was to become famous throughout the country — Stephen A. Douglas. For Hines there were Lincoln; Lincoln's partner, John T. Stuart; and a local lawyer, Charles Emerson, later to be a circuit judge presiding over courts in which Lincoln practiced.

It was an array of talent worthy of a case of great importance in a high court. Lincoln was a legislator and had practiced law for two years. His partner, Stuart, was congressman-elect, having defeated Douglas the previous August by 36 votes out of a total of 36,495. Lincoln, Stuart, and Douglas lived in Springfield; Benedict and Emerson, in Decatur.

The country folk knew all about the affair although there were no newspapers to carry the news. They had heard about the "affray" and the trials in the justice courts. For months there was talk about the "Adkins affair." The people knew the cases would be tried in the brick courthouse and that some prominent lawyers, including a former Macon County resident, Abe Lincoln, would be among them. In addition, there were a number of other cases to be heard. It would be an opportunity to see the lawyers of Central Illinois, who traveled the court circuit, as well as to hear how Dave Adkins came out in his case.

The town was filled with people who came in for the usual trading and visiting during "court week." The courtroom was crowded when Judge Samuel H. Treat convened

court on the morning of June 3, 1839. One of the first cases called at eight o'clock that morning was the one against Adkins for having been in an "affray." There is no record of the lawyers involved. The jury was summoned, the case heard, and the next morning the jury returned a verdict that Adkins was guilty. He was fined \$3.00 and costs, amounting to \$27.00. On June 10, Sheriff James Stevens was told to get the \$30.00. The sheriff levied on "one cow, one yearlin [*sic*] heifer, one clock, one lot of tools" and reported on June 28 that the account was "satisfied."

After the jury had reported its verdict against Adkins, the David Adkins vs. Robert Hines slander case was called. Adkins' lawyers, Douglas and Benedict, had summoned seven witnesses: James Carter, William Woods, William H. Piatt, Edward O. Smith, James McReynolds, Shelton G. Whitney, and Henry Taylor. Hines, through his attorneys, Stuart, Lincoln, and Emerson, had thirteen witnesses: Philip Deeds, Jr., and Jacob Deeds, who lived thirty miles to the southeast and must have traveled an entire day to get there; Abraham Souther, Abraham H. Kellar, Levi Meisenhelter, David Stutesman, Albert G. Snyder, John G. Deeds, Bonaparte Deeds, George Goodman, George Deeds, David Howell, and John Shutters.

When the jury was empaneled, one of its members was Joseph Hanks, a cousin of Lincoln. The defendant's plea of justification (see Appendix) was written by Lincoln and signed by Emerson for the defendant. On the same document is "Pleas both traversed and issue joined in short hand by consent," and signed by "Douglas and Benedict," and "Stuart & Lincoln."

The Lincoln plea admitted that Hines "did speak and publish the said words of and concerning the said plaintiff . . . as he lawfully might" and that Hines was ready to "verefy" that justification. In other words Lincoln said in effect: "Yes, Hines called Adkins a thief and we are ready to prove he had grounds for doing so."

The jury heard the evidence and decided that Hines

was not guilty of slander. The costs of the trial, amounting to \$40.37, were assessed against Adkins. Stephen A. Douglas, however, wanted a new trial and declared that Adkins had discovered new evidence. The affidavit (see Appendix) prepared by Douglas was filed June 6 with the circuit clerk but the judge evidently decided that enough evidence had been heard, since the case was not reopened.

Lincoln had won his case but there still remained the slander suits against George Deeds and Levi Meisenhelter; and, although Lincoln did not know it at the time, within four months, instead of opposing Adkins, Lincoln would be defending him against the other charge involving the theft of a pig. Such circumstances were not unusual in those days, especially when the court was required to appoint lawyers for the defense.

The slander suit against Deeds was continued until the October term of court. There are no records to indicate what part, if any, Lincoln had in the case. In the Adkins vs. Meisenhelter slander suit, the defendant's plea is in Lincoln's handwriting but signed by Emerson. The document is a duplicate of that drawn for Robert Hines with the exception that the name of John G. Deeds appears instead of George C. Deeds.

On October 28, 1839, a dismissal of the suit against Meisenhelter was entered, but on the next day, on appeal, the case was called and the jury selected. Again there was a cousin of Lincoln on the jury. This time it was John Hanks. Lincoln may or may not have been present, but it seems probable that he was, since on the fourth day of the term, he was appointed by the court to serve as attorney for David Adkins in another case. The jury found Meisenhelter not guilty, with the plaintiff to pay the costs "in both courts" and an execution was issued.

On this same day, October 29, the slander suit against Deeds was dismissed at the cost of the plaintiff, David Adkins. But Adkins was not through with the courts. The grand jury

that day brought in an indictment "that the defendant did on or about the 15th of September, 1838, steal a shoat known as the Lancey Shoaat about six months old," the property of John Deeds and valued at \$10. The other thefts of which Adkins was accused had taken place in March.

When the second theft case against Adkins was called on October 31, just two days after Lincoln had won his case against Adkins in the Meisenhelter slander suit, the court record shows that "The defendant being unable to employ counsel . . . the court appointed Abraham Lincoln his attorney. . . ."¹⁵ A jury was called and this time James Hanks was among those selected. Perhaps Lincoln made use of the information in the affidavit prepared by Douglas in June in which it was stated that Adkins had witnesses to prove he was twenty miles away from the Deeds place on September 15, 1838. In any event, Adkins was found not guilty and discharged. Lincoln had won another case, this time for a man he had opposed in two previous trials.

Thus ended a series of cases typical of the many slander cases tried in the courts of that day. It would be interesting to know what fee the firm of Stuart & Lincoln received.¹⁶ It probably was not much, however, for the Stuart & Lincoln fee book shows that charges in 1837 and 1838 were running at \$2.50, \$5.00, \$10.00, and occasionally \$50.00.¹⁷ Later, Lincoln had cases in which he earned much higher fees but throughout his practice he continued to handle many cases for \$5.00, \$10.00, or \$15.00.

One of Lincoln's cases in Macon County before his name disappeared from the records for nine years — 1841 to 1850 — was that of Benjamin Dillehunt vs. Kirby Benedict. Dillehunt had sued Benedict in a Justice of the Peace Court and recovered a judgment for work amounting to \$33.45. Benedict appealed to the Circuit Court, the case coming up in October, 1841, with Judge Samuel Treat presiding. The lower court was sustained and Benedict appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court on a question of law, and again the

lower court was sustained. In this case Emerson and Lincoln appeared for Dillehunt while Lyman Trumbull and Josiah Lamborn appeared for Benedict.

Legal papers in all these cases were written in longhand as there were neither typewriters nor stenographers. Lincoln carried no books and only a few papers in his pocket.¹⁸ Each county brought new cases. Lincoln appeared alone in some of them but more often with a local attorney. In other cases the firm names of Stuart & Lincoln, Logan & Lincoln, and Lincoln & Herndon appear. Decatur lawyers frequently associated with Lincoln were Charles Emerson, Kirby Benedict, Joel S. Post, and Anthony Thornton.

Frequently, Lincoln would appear with a local lawyer in one case and on the same day would appear in another case with his erstwhile associate opposing him. Richard J. Oglesby's name does not appear in any Macon County cases as an associate of Lincoln, but Oglesby was an attorney in cases in which Lincoln appeared.

In Macon County, Lincoln handled cases before four judges: in 1838, Jesse B. Thomas presided; from 1839 through 1848, Samuel H. Treat; from 1849 through the May term of 1853, David Davis; and from 1854 on, Charles Emerson.

In 1841 the four counties of Macon, Piatt, Shelby, and Champaign were added to the eighth judicial district. Examination of records in various counties shows that Lincoln did not travel the entire circuit after the enlargement, and seldom, if ever, attended court in Macon, Shelby, Mason, and Livingston counties.¹⁹

Although the court records in Macon County do not show Lincoln's name after 1841 until June, 1850, he was back attending court in the fall term of 1849. "It was the fashion of the day," relates Mrs. Jane Johns, "for the men to wear large shawls and Mr. Lincoln's shawl, very soft and very fine, is the only article of dress that has left the faintest impression on my memory. He wore it folded over the shoulders, caught together under his chin with an immense safety pin. One end

of the shawl was thrown across his breast and over his shoulder, as he walked up the steps of the Macon House one day in December, 1849."²⁰

It was a memorable meeting. Mrs. Johns was living at the Macon House and her piano had just arrived from Ohio after having gone by steamer down the Ohio River and up the Wabash River to Crawfordsville, Indiana, and thence by wagon to Decatur. The wagon with the piano was at the front door of the hotel and the problem was how to unload it. David Krone, Macon House landlord, suggested there would be plenty of help when the lawyers from the court arrived for their noon meal.

When they came, there were Lincoln, Stephen Logan, Leonard Swett, and others. Mr. Krone explained the situation. "A tall gentleman stepped forward and, throwing off his big gray Scotch shawl, exclaimed, 'Come on Swett, you are the next biggest man!'"²¹ The tall gentleman was Lincoln. He talked to the driver a few moments, then went to the basement of the hotel and returned with two heavy timbers across his shoulders. The big box was slid from the wagon to the doorstep.

Dinner interrupted the setting up of the piano but after the meal the piano legs were screwed into place and Lincoln superintended the placing of the instrument. The lawyers rushed off to court, with Mrs. Johns promising to play for them that evening. Judge David Davis, who stayed at the home of Mrs. A. A. Powers, came to the Macon House, as did practically all the lawyers, and listened to a long program of pianoforte solos and songs. Lincoln thanked Mrs. Johns for the concert.

When Lincoln resumed his court practice in Macon County in 1850 Judge David Davis as the presiding judge traveled from court to court with Lincoln and other lawyers. Lincoln had served a term in Congress from 1847 to 1849 and returned to Springfield determined to forsake politics and devote himself to law.²² Lincoln could afford a horse and buggy by this time. "Old Buck,"²³ was "an indifferent, raw-

boned specimen" of a horse pulling a "blacksmith-made buggy"²⁴ of very ordinary appearance.

Henry C. Whitney met Lincoln on the circuit in the fall of 1854. Lincoln must have appeared much as he did when he came to Decatur to resume practice in 1850. "His ears were large," says Whitney, "his hair, coarse, black and bushy, which stood out all over his head, with no appearance of ever having been combed. . . . His attire and physical habits were on a plane with those of an ordinary farmer: — his hat was innocent of nap: — his boots had no acquaintance with blacking: — his carpet-bag was well-worn and dilapidated: — his umbrella was substantial, but of faded green, well worn, the knob gone, and the name 'A. Lincoln' cut out of white muslin, and sewed in the inside: — and for an outer garment a short circular blue cloak, which he got in Washington in 1849 and kept for ten years. . . . He probably had as little taste about dress and attire as anybody that ever was born: he simply wore clothes because it was needful and customary; whether they fitted or looked well was entirely above, or beneath, his comprehension."²⁵

"He was careless about dress, though he was always clean," said George P. Davis, son of Judge Davis. "I thought his clothes were too short for him, especially his coat. For a necktie he wore an old fashioned stiff stock which encircled his neck. When he became interested in his speech he would frequently take it off, unbutton his shirt, and give room for his Adam's apple to play up and down. He had a high-pitched voice, but it could be heard a great distance, every word of a sentence being equally clear."²⁶

Returning to Decatur in the winter of 1849, Lincoln found Macon County comprising the same area it has today with a population of 4,000 of which 900 lived in Decatur. Part of the county had been whittled away in 1839 to help form DeWitt County. In 1841, part of DeWitt and more of Macon went to form Piatt County, and in 1843 the last amputation was made to help form Moultrie County.

Decatur was still without a newspaper and the Northern

Cross Railroad, started in 1837 to cross the state from the Illinois River to the Indiana state line, had been completed only to Springfield. Streets were unpaved and the old square was a parking place for farmers' teams and wagons. Mail came more or less regularly by five stage lines west, north, south, east to Paris and southeast to Shelbyville.

The gold rush in California was drawing off well-known citizens. The business part of the town was largely confined to the four original blocks about the old square although there was a movement eastward with the Macon House being built on what is now Franklin Street. It was as though Decatur was standing waiting for the first railroad, the first bank, and the first newspaper, all of which were to come in the next five years and with them a considerable growth in population.

Abe Lincoln, having formed a new law partnership in Springfield with William H. Herndon, was now traveling in fourteen counties. In Macon County there was the routine of suits over notes, slander, ejectment, and a divorce case, but there are no records of a murder case in which Lincoln was an attorney, although local tradition has it that he did appear in at least one, possibly two, murder trials in Decatur.

When Pat Spangler was eighty-nine years old he told Fred L. Sidthorp of Decatur that when he (Spangler) was a small boy, he had been the star witness in a murder case in 1858 or 1859 in which Lincoln was one of the attorneys. It was Spangler's story that his two older brothers had gone to the Revere House, formerly the Macon House, to dance. Young Pat followed and watched the dance from a porch. He saw a man leave the hotel by the porch door at the same time "Patsy" Maher, a bus driver for the hotel, who was under the influence of liquor, was crossing the street carrying a cane.

Without a word, related Spangler, Maher beat the man over the head with the cane and later the man died of his injuries. Spangler was the only eyewitness. He ran inside and called others. The trial was in the brick courthouse and the

room was jammed. Spangler was scared! Maher was defended by Lincoln, assisted by John R. Eden of Sullivan. When young Spangler was placed on the witness stand, Lincoln calmed his fears and then got from him the story of what happened. Maher was sentenced to a year in prison, according to Spangler.

Because of Lincoln's special kindness to him, Spangler said he waded through mud and water to get to the train to see Lincoln when he passed through Decatur on his way to Washington to become President.

John McGinnis is quoted in Coleman's *History of Decatur* as relating that Lincoln defended a man in a murder trial which was adjourned from the brick courthouse to the Powers Hall on East Main Street, to accommodate the crowd. Oglesby and Sheridan Wait, McGinnis said, prosecuted the case. This may be the same case that Spangler told about. There are no Decatur papers in 1858 available and there are no court records of a murder case such as Spangler described.

In June, 1851, James Shoaf started Decatur's first newspaper. In 1852, Jasper J. Peddecord opened Decatur's first bank with a safe in the back of his general store, and on December 6, 1852, Sullivan Burgess, a civil engineer of Decatur, left Springfield, Illinois, with a corps of eighteen men to make a survey for the Great Western Railroad to Decatur, arriving in Decatur on Christmas Day. The Illinois Central already had made its survey through the town.

The Great Western brought its first train to Decatur in April, 1854, and Lincoln no longer had to drive his horse and buggy to Macon County. In October of the same year the Illinois Central brought its first train in from the north and by January 6, 1855, was operating as far south as Vandalia. Lincoln's circuit riding days were not over but he could reach Decatur, Clinton, Bloomington, and Lincoln by rail from Springfield. He still had to travel by stage or his own transportation to Piatt, Champaign, Coles, Moultrie, Shelby, and Vermilion Counties. It was not until March, 1858, that the Great Western carried him out of Decatur to Tolono and on to Urbana.

Decatur started to boom with the coming of the railroads. By the time the Great Western trains started, the town's population was 1,600. The population of the county more than doubled between 1850 and 1855, going from 3,988 to 8,365. By January, 1857, Decatur's population was 3,650 and for two years the citizens had been discussing the cost of a new courthouse.

Lincoln's court practice in the county had been heavy up to this time. In 1855 he represented Richard J. Gatling, of machine-gun fame, William Martin and Henry Prather in an ejectment suit against the Great Western Railroad. Lincoln had filed papers that the railroad company was using five acres "more or less" and withholding "from plaintiffs the possession thereof, to their damage of five hundred dollars, and therefore bring this suit." His was the only name signed to the complaint. This case continued in the courts for two years, once going to the Supreme Court, and finally was submitted to the Circuit Court without jury in July, 1857, but was not finally settled until August, 1859, when Joel L. Post, then representing the plaintiffs, dismissed the suit.

The Macon County Circuit Court by 1857 was attracting a notable array of legal talent. The *Illinois State Chronicle* of Decatur on July 23, 1857, stated:

"The Circuit Court is now in session. His honor Judge Emerson presiding. We notice among the lawyers present, Gen. U. F. Linder, from Charleston, one of the most eloquent and witty orators in the State; John P. Usher, of Terre Haute, Ind.; C. H. Constable and John Robinson, of Marshall; Messrs. Edwards, Logan and Lincoln, from Springfield; H. P. H. Bromwell, of Vandalia; John R. Eden, Prosecuting Attorney, from Sullivan; Ward H. Lamon, from Danville; Thos. Milligan and E. McComas, of Monticello, and O. B. Ficklin and our old friend, Jas. Steele; an array of legal talent seldom brought together at a circuit court session."

Charles Emerson, the first resident lawyer of Macon County, who had served with Lincoln in the Adkins slander cases and others, had been elected judge of the Macon County Circuit Court in 1853 succeeding Judge David Davis.

In 1855 among the lawyers having advertising cards in the Decatur newspapers were R. McWilliams, Joel S. Post, Richard J. Oglesby, Sheridan Wait, C. C. Post, P. B. Shepard, Thorpe & Tupper, and J. P. Boyd. It was that year that the name of A. Lincoln was found among the signers to this notice published in the *State Chronicle*:

"We are authorized to announce Stephen A. Corneau as a candidate for clerk of the supreme court, for the second grand division of Illinois, at the election to be holden on the first Monday of June, A.D. 1855.

"The undersigned, from a long knowledge of S. A. Corneau, and having confidence in his ability to perform the duties of Clerk of the Supreme Court, of the second grand division of Illinois, do recommend him to the members of the bar and public, as a competent person to fill said office."²⁷

By 1857 Lincoln's cases in Macon County were exceedingly few. He had been here in 1856 to advise on the launching of the Anti-Nebraska Party. The elections of 1858 were in the offing. He was turning more and more to politics and while the firm of Lincoln & Herndon is given as counsel in a case in April, 1858, Herndon's name alone appears with that of local lawyers in the action.

Lincoln was in Decatur for the spring term of court in 1859, the *State Chronicle* on March 3 saying "the amount of business docketed for this term is not very large. There are 292 common law cases, 77 chancery suits, and 47 cases on the criminal docket, a number of them being for selling liquor, gambling, and such other offenses. . . . There is but few if any cases of public interest." On March 10 the *Chronicle* printed this single sentence: "Hon. A. Lincoln, of Springfield, was in the city on Monday last."

Lincoln's Circuit Court days in Decatur were over but the stamp of Abraham Lincoln the lawyer had been left on the community. The tall raw-boned lawyer and politician was going on to bigger fields. Years later Judge David Davis, who had sat on the bench in Decatur's old brick courthouse

and listened to the pleadings of Lincoln, said of him, when speaking in Indianapolis:

“. . . In all the elements that constitute the great lawyer, he had few equals. He was both great at *nisi prius* and before an appellate tribunal. He seized the strong points of a cause, and presented them with clearness and great compactness. His mind was logical and direct, and he did not indulge in extraneous discussion. Generalities and platitudes had no charm for him. An unfailing vein of humor never deserted him; and he was always able to chain the attention of court and jury, when the cause was the most uninteresting, by the appropriateness of his anecdotes.

“His power of comparison was large, and he rarely failed in a legal discussion to use that mode of reasoning. The framework of his mental and moral being was honesty, and a wrong cause was poorly defended by him. In order to bring into full activity his great powers, it was necessary that he should be convinced of the right and justice of the matter which he advocated. When so convinced, whether the cause was great or small, he was usually successful. He read law books but little, except when the cause in hand made it necessary; yet he was usually self-reliant, depending on his own resources, and rarely consulting his brother lawyers, either on the management of his case or on the legal question involved.

“Mr. Lincoln was the fairest and most accommodating of practitioners, granting all favors which he could do consistently with his duty to his client, and rarely availing himself of an unwary oversight of his adversary. . . . To his honor be it said, that he never took from a client, even when the cause was gained, more than he thought the service was worth and the client could reasonably afford to pay. The people where he practiced law were not rich, and his charges were always small. . . . He was not fond of controversy, and would compromise a lawsuit whenever practicable.”²⁸

CHAPTER 7

A New Party

"Washington's birthday, 1856, was an important date in the history of the Republican party and a decisive point in Lincoln's political life."

— Albert J. Beveridge
Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858

Abraham Lincoln was in Decatur on Friday, February 22, 1856, placing one of the important stepping stones that was to lead him to the White House four years later. All editors in Illinois opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska bill had been called to meet in convention. Lincoln was the only person not an editor. He was making his first public association with the forces that were the real beginning of the Republican Party in Illinois.¹

Lincoln had been a man without a party,² for the Whigs were floundering and had been barely alive for the last four years. His coming to Decatur on Washington's birthday, 1856, ended his indecision and reluctance to break old party ties. It was a decisive step to make a new political alliance.³ Under the banner of "Anti-Nebraska," a Republican Party unrelated to the Abolitionist-dominated Republican Party of Illinois of 1854 was in the making.

Two years before the editors met, Anti-Nebraska forces had started to organize when it became apparent that the Kansas-Nebraska bill would be passed by Congress. In May, 1854, the bill was passed and the Missouri Compromise, which prohibited slavery in any territory north of latitude 36 degrees, 30 minutes, was repealed. In providing territorial government for the Kansas-Nebraska area, the new measure established the principle of "popular sovereignty" or the

right of the people of a territory to choose their own institutions. Under this principle they could make their decision as to whether they would or would not have slavery. The bill was construed as opening the way for the spread of slavery into new territory.

Opposition to the bill, before and after it passed, drew strength from Stephen A. Douglas' Democratic Party, the Whigs, and other parties — this opposition becoming known as the Anti-Nebraska movement. There was no unification of the opposition, no central directing organization. Mass meetings were attended by leading Democrats as well as others. In Illinois the *Tazewell Mirror*, a Whig newspaper at Pekin, proposed a state convention of "all parties and divisions of parties opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise" to be called to make arrangements for the fall election of 1854. The proposal failed.

Illinois Whigs opposed the Nebraska bill but they did not want to lose their identity and proposed that dissenting Democrats and others join them. In October, 1854, an Anti-Nebraska or fusion state convention under the name of the Republican Party met in Springfield with twenty-six delegates present. Leading Abolitionists were in charge,⁴ Anti-Nebraska Democrats and Whigs refusing to be involved. A campaign was made that fall, but the new party failed to be the fusion party expected.

Efforts continued elsewhere in the state to bring together the Anti-Nebraska forces. The meeting of editors in Decatur was an outgrowth of the effort at consolidation. On the day the editors were in session, the Republican Party, which was founded in Ripon, Wisconsin, in 1854, was organized on a national basis in Pittsburgh and a nominating convention was called to meet in Philadelphia, June 17, 1856. Strangely enough, also on that same February 22, the American (Know Nothing) Party, which had been formed out of a portion of the defunct Whig Party and some Democrats, held its National Convention in Philadelphia, reaffirming the party creed with its slogan of "Americans Must Rule

America." That fall the "Know-Nothings" polled about 20,000 votes in Illinois.

Early in 1855 William J. Usrey and Charles H. Wingate started publication of the *Illinois State Chronicle* in Decatur with Usrey as editor. Its purpose was to unite the anti-slavery remnants of the Whig Party with all other opponents of slavery extension. "We speak without fear or favor of any particular party," said the announcement on policy. "Our sentiments will be Republican sentiments, so far as we understand Republicanism. We thank the fates that we are not linked to parties, and bound to go blind upon any party hobbies."⁵

In a few months Editor Usrey was calling for a convention of Anti-Nebraska forces. In an editorial on August 16, 1855, suggesting the convention, he said:

"What do you say, gentlemen? Let us hear from you. In the meantime we will give you our own views. We believe that the only true course is by a Republican movement. We can conceive of no other plan so well adapted to reduce our doctrines to practise. You cannot unite the whole anti forces upon whiggery, for that is dead. Know Nothingism is objectionable to many strong anti-Nebraska men, and there is no other organized party, save the Republican movement; all can unite upon a common platform, and be true to ourselves and to our principles. Freedom of thought and action are the peculiar characteristics of the American people at this time, with the exception of a small clique (to whom it is not necessary to give a name at this time). The people will not be throttled into the support of any party merely for the purpose of gratifying their desire to kill Judge Douglas, and strike a death blow at the pernicious doctrines contained in his favorite 'squatter sovereign bill.'

"If democrats surrender their long cherished doctrines, they will require the same of whigs and abolitionists, and no more can be asked of them. The extension of slavery has been thrust upon the Union by the principles of the Nebraska bill, and it must be met; it is the all-absorbing

question, there is no dodging it, and for one we are in favor of giving it battle, let there be no sulking in camp, face the enemy and strike them down, and by this means more will be accomplished in putting an end to agitation than by any other."

Paul Selby, editor of the *Morgan Journal* in Jacksonville, Illinois, also was seeking to consolidate Anti-Nebraska forces, and after the *State Chronicle* editorial in August, Selby suggested that the Anti-Nebraska editors should meet. In 1912 Selby, in recalling the convention, said:

"There appeared, early in January, 1856, in the editorial columns of the *Morgan Journal*, a weekly newspaper, at Jacksonville, Illinois, a suggestion favoring the holding of a conference of anti-Nebraska editors of the State to consider and agree upon a line of policy to be pursued during the approaching campaign. The first indorsement came from the *Winchester (Ill.) Chronicle*, then under the editorship of the late John Moses, afterwards the private secretary of the first Governor Richard Yates, and still later author of *Moses' History of Illinois*.

"The indorsement of the *Winchester* paper, followed by a similar note of approval from the *Illinois State Chronicle* published at Decatur, and on the suggestion of the latter, Decatur was agreed upon as the place. . . ."

Selby's editorial appeared earlier than January, 1856,⁷ as Usrey in an editorial in the *State Chronicle* on Dec. 6, 1855, gave approval of Selby's suggestion for a meeting of editors:

"We sometime since took the liberty of suggesting that a Convention of the anti-Nebraska forces be convened at no distant day, at some suitable point, say Bloomington, Springfield, or Decatur, in order that the principles contended for may be made available and an undivided front be presented to the common enemy, that a withering rebuke may be given the administration party, through the ballot box.

"We are in a large majority in Illinois, and union, harmony and concert of action is [*sic*] absolutely necessary to success. A fair understanding at the start, and success is both

certain and easy. The following from the "Winchester Chronicle" meets our views and we give it our support:

"The Editor of the Morgan Journal with a view to harmonize the various elements of the great anti-Nebraska party in this State, proposes a Convention of the editors of the various anti-Nebraska papers. We second the motion. It is high time for better understanding among those who are battling in the same great cause. Why not have a convention, say in Decatur, which is central and of easy access, and that soon? "The anti-Nebraska papers," as the Morgan Journal says, "comprise the ablest and by far the most respectable portion of the Press in the State." There surely ought to be some course taken to insure of action.'

"Let us hear from those papers immediately and let us have the time most convenient to hold the convention named, suppose we say the 8th of January next.

"Our city is easy of access, situated as it is on the main track of the Illinois Central Railroad, immediately at the junction of this and the Great Western, with a daily line of coaches running eastward, it can be reached as soon as any other point in the State. Our hotels are large and well kept, so there will be no inconvenience suffered by our editorial brethren while in attendance on the convention. We would suggest that all anti-Administration editors throughout the State publish the call and give us their views upon the subject; shall we have a response?"

Out of Usrey's and Selby's editorials grew the editors' meeting and from the editors' meeting came the call for the Bloomington convention in May, 1856, which turned out to be the organization meeting of the Republican Party in Illinois — although the party was not immediately called Republican.

The Anti-Nebraska forces, which had started forming in March, 1854,⁸ now seemed to be the logical political organization to absorb the Whigs who were seeking a new party home.⁹ The movement towards this new organization is de-

scribed by John G. Nicolay¹⁰ and John Hay in their monumental biography of Lincoln in these words:

"In the State of Illinois, the spring of the year of 1856 saw an almost spontaneous impulse toward the formation of a new party. As already described, it was a transition period in politics. The disorganization of the Whig party was materially increased and hastened by the failure, two years before, to make Lincoln a Senator. On the other hand, the election of Trumbull served quite as effectively to consolidate the Democratic rebellion against Douglas in his determination to make the support of his Nebraska bill a test of party orthodoxy. Many of the Northern counties had formed 'Republican' organizations in the two previous years; but the name was entirely local, while the opposition, not yet united, but fighting in factions against the Nebraska bill, only acknowledged political affinity under the general term of the 'Anti-Nebraska' party.

"In the absence of any existing machinery, some fifteen editors of anti-Nebraska newspapers met for conference at Decatur on the 22nd of February and issued a call for a delegate State convention of the 'Anti-Nebraska party' to meet at Bloomington on the 29th of May."¹¹

Abraham Lincoln was in Decatur by invitation and, seemingly, by persuasion, on that historic day of the editors' meeting. Paul Selby had been a participant in the Springfield "Republican" Convention of October, 1854,¹² when Lincoln was rushed out of town¹³ to avoid being asked to make an address which would have identified him with the organization largely in the hands of the Abolitionists — and Lincoln was not an Abolitionist.¹⁴ Now Selby was interested in getting Lincoln to Decatur on February 22, 1856.

Eight days before the editors met, Selby wrote from Springfield to his friend Richard Yates, lawyer and former United States senator, who was at that time president of the Tonica and Petersburg Railroad, and later governor of Illinois, disclosing a conversation with Lincoln about going to

Decatur and also revealing that Selby and Yates were discussing the immediate future of Illinois politics. Not being an editor, Lincoln was not included in the general list of invitations to the editors' meeting, but Selby invited him to be present.

In his letter to Yates, Selby wrote:

"Dear Sir: I have had an interview with Mr. Lincoln to-day, and some conversation in reference to matters we were talking about last evening. I wish you would endeavor to see him soon, at least before the Editorial Convention. He tells me he thinks he will try and have some business at Decatur at the time of the Convention. Can't you do the same? I think we all agree as to what is to be done at the Convention. . . .

"He read to me a letter from the gentleman we were speaking of last evening for Govr. which contains the assurances you have been seeking for. This he will show you when you see him, but of course this is all in confidence. I write because I shall not probably be in Jacksonville before the Convention at Decatur."¹⁵

Lincoln had come home on March 31, 1849, from his one term in Congress, out of politics and ready to resume his law practice.¹⁶ By 1854 he was back in politics as a Whig member of the State Legislature, an office which he shortly resigned to seek election as United States senator. When he could not muster the necessary votes in the Legislature to be named senator, he used his strength to elect Lyman Trumbull.

Trumbull's election in February, 1855, was a bitter defeat and a last staggering blow to the Whig forces. A few months afterward, on August 24, Lincoln wrote to his friend, Joshua Speed in Kentucky: "You inquire where I now stand. That is a disputed point — I think I am a Whig; but others say there are no whigs, and that I am an abolitionist. . . . I am not a Know-Nothing. That is certain. . . ."¹⁷

Lincoln was a man without a party. However, the political mills were slowly grinding out a new party — the Anti-

Nebraska Party. Thus far there was no designation of party; the members were merely "forces." Whatever was to be its future, Lincoln was interested as an Anti-Nebraska Whig but it was not until February 22, 1856, that he publicly identified himself with a central organization by coming to Decatur to advise with the Anti-Nebraska editors of Illinois.

Selby declared: "The most important work of the convention was transacted through the medium of the committee on resolutions. Mr. Lincoln came up from Springfield and was in conference with the committee during the day, and there is reason to believe that the platform, reported through Dr. Ray, as their chairman, and adopted by the convention, bears the stamp of his peculiar intellect. . . . As a matter of fact, the only outsider admitted to the deliberations of the convention was Abraham Lincoln, and his relations were chiefly with the committee on resolutions during the deliberation."¹⁸

Strangely enough Editor Usrey, who was secretary of the convention, did not mention in his Decatur paper that Lincoln had anything to do with the resolutions or the convention other than to be present at the banquet that followed. In the official statement sent out to the press of the state there was no mention of Lincoln. The *Chicago Tribune* carried on February 25, 1856, the official report signed by Selby and Usrey with no other details.

Having accepted the suggestion that the editors meet in Decatur and having asked the Anti-Nebraska editors throughout the state to "publish the call and give their views upon the subject," Usrey in the edition of the weekly *State Chronicle* on January 10, 1856, published this call:

Editorial Convention

"All editors in Illinois opposed to the Nebraska Bill, are requested to meet in convention at Decatur, Illinois, on the 22d of February next, for the purpose of making arrangements for the organizing of the Anti-Nebraska forces in this State for the coming contest. All Editors favoring the move-

ment will please forward a copy of their paper containing their approval to the Office of the Illinois State Chronicle, Decatur, Illinois.

The following papers have announced their approval.

"*Journal*, Jacksonville

"*Chronicle*, Winchester

"*Chronicle*, Decatur

"*Whig*, Quincy

"*Press*, Pike County"

In the January 17 edition of the weekly, two more papers were added to the list: *Gazette*, Lacon; *Tribune*, Chicago.

The *Tribune* in commenting on the convention said in part: "The reasons set forth by the [Morgan] *Journal* so clearly and well are sufficient. If it be the will of the free state editors to hold such a convention, the *Tribune* will be represented. We need only add that the proposition meets our cordial approbation and we hope a ready response will be heard from every section of the Prairie State on the part of the editorial corps not bound to swear by Douglas and slavery."¹⁹

When the February 7 edition of the weekly *Chronicle* went to press, papers that had given approval included: *Staats-Zeitung*, Chicago; *Republican*, Quincy; *Plaindealer*, Oquawka; *Republican*, Peoria; *Prairie State*, Danville; *Advertiser*, Rock Island; *Journal* [German], Quincy; *Fultonian*, Vermont; *Beacon*, Aurora; *Journal*, Freeport; *Pantagraph*, Bloomington; *True Democrat*, Joliet; *Telegraph*, Lockport; *Gazette*, Kankakee City; *Guardian*, Aurora; *Gazette*, Waukegan; *Chronicle*, Peru; *Advocate*, Belleville.

In the February 14 edition the *Journal*, Chicago, and *Journal*, Peoria, were added to those having endorsed the convention.

By that time the *Chicago Tribune* had printed another editorial endorsing the convention in which it said in part: "At the present time there is but little unanimity of action, and possibly but little feeling, among the editorial corps of

the State. The Anti-Nebraska party is wholly without an organization, and every newspaper is a law unto itself; and though all are contending for a common object, they are going divers ways to accomplish it. What we need is a full and free conference, a general concurrence in some system of policy, which may, we think, be adopted, and in a platform of principles which all may embrace and for which all may contend."²⁰

One week before the convention Editor Usrey estimated there would be fifty to seventy-five editors present but he could not know that a snowstorm would cripple and delay railroad transportation the day of the convention. A committee of Decatur citizens consisting of Dr. Henry C. Johns, Major Edward O. Smith, Captain Isaac C. Pugh, Warner W. Oglesby, William Martin, Jerome R. Gorin, Charles H. Wingate, and J. W. Clement arranged to give the editors a public dinner.

Only a dozen editors had arrived by convention time. The storm had kept some at home. Two or three arrived too late. Others, while endorsing the meeting, evidently hesitated to commit themselves by their presence. Lincoln, however, had made up his mind and stepped out into the stream of rapidly developing political events to become identified with the new party. The editors present at the opening of the meeting were:

E. W. Blaisdell, *Rockford Republican*
 Elias C. Daugherty, *Rockford Register*
 Charles Faxon, *Princeton Post*
 Allen N. Ford, *Lacon Gazette*
 Thomas J. Pickett, *Peoria Republican*
 Virgil Y. Ralston, *Quincy Whig*
 Dr. Charles R. Ray, *Chicago Tribune*
 George Schneider, *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* (Chicago)
 Paul Selby, *Morgan Journal*
 Benjamin F. Shaw, *Dixon Telegraph*
 William J. Usrey, *Decatur Chronicle*
 Oliver P. Wharton, *Rock Island Advertiser*

The meeting was held in the parlor of the Cassell House, forerunner of the St. Nicholas Hotel on Lincoln Square. Selby was made chairman and Usrey, secretary. The credentials committee composed of Faxon, Ford, and Shaw immediately excluded a reporter of the *St. Louis Republican*, a pro-slavery paper, who wanted to sit in on the convention.²¹ That was all that committee had to do; the resolutions committee had the important work.

On the resolutions committee, with Ray of the *Chicago Tribune* as chairman, were Schneider, Ralston, Wharton, Daugherty, and Pickett. Schneider was editor of the leading German paper in the state. The Know-Nothing party with its slogan, "Americans Must Rule America," caused Schneider to insist that the editors' convention platform have a moderate anti-Know-Nothing plank.²² Lincoln is reported to have consented, although it struck at some of his old friends in the Whig Party.²³ On the other hand the German vote in Illinois was important.

Selby later declared that "Messrs. Ray and Schneider . . . were also influential factors in shaping the declaration of principles with which the new party in Illinois started on its long career."²⁴ The platform did not mention the name "Republican," but in general the Decatur platform (see Appendix) formed the basis for the one later adopted by the Anti-Nebraska forces in Bloomington, May 29, 1856, when a state ticket was nominated and Lincoln made his famous "lost speech."

The editors said they were "cheerfully according to the Slave States all the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution," while the Bloomington platform recorded that "we will maintain all constitutional rights of the South." The editors went on to say that "we will strive by all legal means to restore to Kansas and Nebraska, a legal guarantee against Slavery, of which they were deprived at cost of the violation of the plighted faith of the Nation." The Bloomington platform used almost the identical language: ". . . we will strive by all constitutional means to assure to Kansas and Nebraska

the legal guaranty against slavery of which they were deprived at the cost of the violation of the plighted faith of the nation."

In its anti-Know-Nothing plank the editors declared "that in regard to office we hold merit, not birthplace to be the test . . ." while the Bloomington platform declared ". . . we will proscribe no one, by legislation or otherwise, on account of religious opinions, or in consequence of place of birth."

Both platforms ended with a condemnation of the handling of state finances.

The editors adopted the platform and proceeded with the naming of a State Central Committee consisting of a representative from each of the nine congressional districts and two from the state at large: Selden M. Church, Rockford; William B. Ogden, Chicago; Gavion D. A. Parks, Joliet; Thomas J. Pickett, Peoria; Edward A. Dudley, Quincy; William H. Herndon, Springfield; Richard J. Oglesby, Decatur; Joseph Gillespie, Edwardsville; David L. Phillips, Jonesboro; and from the state at large, Gustave Koerner, Belleville, and Ira O. Wilkinson, Rock Island.

Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, an abolitionist Whig and a member of the 1854 Republican Party, is not likely to have been on the State Central Committee without Lincoln's consent. A month after the editors' convention Herndon declared: "This appointment is deemed by me the highest honor of my life,"²⁵ but when he wrote his *Life of Lincoln* he passed over the convention. Gillespie was a "Know-Nothing" Whig and Koerner a German Democrat.

Oglesby left soon after the editors' meeting for a tour of Europe, and Colonel Pugh was appointed in his place. Ogden resigned due to absence from the state, and Dr. John Evans of Chicago was named to his place. Koerner, then Lieutenant Governor, declined to serve due to his long affiliation with the Democratic Party and the fact that he was not certain the time had arrived for a new party.

Final action of the formal session of the editors' meeting

was to recommend that a convention of Anti-Nebraska forces of the state be called to meet in Bloomington on May 29, 1856. This was the convention in which the Republican Party in Illinois would be formally launched under the name of "Anti-Nebraska forces."

Business of the convention was over by mid-afternoon. In his news report of the convention in the weekly edition of the *State Chronicle*, February 28, 1956,²⁶ Usrey called it "a large and respectable meeting of the Editors of the anti-Nebraska Press of Illinois." The proceedings and platform appeared on the front page. On the editorial page of the same edition, Usrey tells of the dinner meeting:

"The Convention

"Owing to the failure of two trains, a portion of the Editorial brethren failed to arrive in time to participate in the Convention, and some returned home without visiting our city. There was, however, quite a number of presses represented personally and by proxy, sufficient to transact the business for which they were called.

"The session was a very harmonious one, and all went away with bright expectations for the future. The Platform and proceedings may be found on the outside.

"At 1½ past 3 p.m. the Editorial Fraternity, along with a goodly number of citizens of this city, and invited guests, repaired to the spacious dining room of the Cassell House, where a sumptuous dinner had been prepared by the citizens, under the supervision of the Committee, — Capt. I. C. Pugh, Dr. H. C. Johns, Maj. E. O. Smith, and others, Capt. Pugh presiding. After partaking of the substantials, and etc., the meeting was called to order by the President, who delivered a neat and appropriate address welcoming the Editorial Fraternity to the hospitality of the citizens. His remarks were well received.

"Mr. Blaisdell, in behalf of the press, responded with the sentiment: 'The Citizens of Decatur — we fully appreciate their hospitality.'

"Mr. Oglesby was then loudly called for. Mr. O. made a number of witty remarks and concluded by toasting Mr. Abram Lincoln, as the warm and consistent friend of Illinois, and our next candidate for the U. S. Senate. (Prolonged applause.)

"Mr. Lincoln arose, and said, the latter part of that sentiment I am in favor of. (Laughter) Mr. L. said, that he was very much in the position of the man who was attacked by a robber, demanding his money, when he answered, 'My dear fellow, I have no money, but if you will go with me to the light, I will give you my note,' and, resumed Mr. L., if you will let me off I will give you my note. (Laughter, and loud cries of go on.) Mr. Lincoln then proceeded to address the assemblage for some half hour, in his usual masterly manner, frequently interrupted by the cheers of his hearers.

"Mr. Baker of the State Journal, was then called for, and responded, that owing to the bountiful dinner, he was too full for utterance, but would give as a toast, 'Hon. Dick Oglesby, the next Secretary of State.' (Applause.)

"Mr. Ray addressed the audience upon the Kansas difficulty, at some length, and was listened to with marked attention.

"To give all the toasts and speeches, uttered on the occasion, would exceed our space, and we bring this article to a close, by the remark, that we were somewhat surprised, that our Nebraska friends, both in the city and attending from abroad, did not participate in the dinner, as such was the intention of the committee."

There is not complete agreement whether Lincoln was toasted as being the next "U. S. senator" from Illinois or as a candidate for governor. Perhaps both toasts were offered. Usrey said Lincoln was toasted as the next United States senator, while Selby, who presided at the dinner, stated in a letter dated June 7, 1912 and published in the *Decatur Herald* of June 9, that Oglesby suggested Lincoln's name as a candidate for governor.

Usrey reported that Lincoln responded to the suggestion

that he be the next senator by saying he was in sympathy with the idea, while Selby wrote of Lincoln halting a movement to make him a candidate for governor:

"In the course of his speech, referring to a movement some of the editors present had inaugurated to make him the anti-Nebraska candidate for Governor at the ensuing election, Mr. Lincoln spoke [in substance] as follows: 'I wish to say . . . it was nothing more than an attempt to resurrect the dead body of the old Whig party. I would secure the vote of that party and no more, and our defeat will follow as a matter of course. But I can suggest a name that will secure not only the old Whig vote, but enough Anti-Nebraska Democrats to give us the victory. The man is Colonel William H. Bissell.'"²⁷

Shaw of Dixon related another incident of the Lincoln speech at the dinner. Lincoln said, according to Shaw, that he felt like the ugly man riding through a wood who met a woman, also on horseback, who stopped and said:

"Well, for land sake, you are the homeliest man I ever saw."

"Yes, madam, but I can't help it," he replied.

"No, I suppose not," she observed, "but you might stay at home."²⁸

What else Mr. Lincoln said in that half-hour speech which Usrey did not have space for in his paper may never be known. One wonders whether Lincoln's suggestion of Bissell as a good candidate for governor explains the line in Selby's letter to Yates: "He read to me a letter from the gentleman we were speaking of last evening for Govr."; and whether the convention fulfilled the expectations mentioned in another line in the letter: "I think we all agree as to what is to be done at the convention."

The editors' convention created the machinery to start a new political party in Illinois. Lincoln was at the launching. He became almost immediately its leader.

CHAPTER 8

The 1856 Campaign

"Hon. A. Lincoln . . . is already in the field doing effective service. . . ."

— *Illinois State Chronicle*
Decatur, Illinois.

Abraham Lincoln came to Decatur May 28, 1856, the day before the convention of Anti-Nebraska forces convened in Bloomington. He had been attending court in Danville and drove as far as Tolono where he boarded a Great Western train.¹ At Tolono he was joined by Henry Clay Whitney of Urbana, who later wrote *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*. Also in the party arriving in Decatur was Joseph O. Cunningham, editor of the *Urbana Union*.

As there was no train to Bloomington that afternoon or night the men remained at the Cassell House on the "Old Square" where Lincoln had spoken to the Anti-Nebraska editors three months before. When Judge and Mrs. Cunningham visited Decatur in October, 1906, the judge recalled that stopover with Lincoln.

"A number of young men were going with Mr. Lincoln, at his invitation, to attend the anti-Nebraska party convention in Bloomington," he said. "They got to Decatur in the afternoon, and as there was no train to Bloomington that night, they remained over here. We got off the train at the station, and found that we were still some distance in the country. There were no houses near the station then. It was the old brick Union Station, standing in the angle of the Illinois Central and Wabash tracks. It had been completed only a year or two and was about the finest in this part of the country.

"We all walked up town. No streets were laid out in that part of the country, and we took a path wandering across the bog. We headed straight for Decatur, which could be seen at some distance, up a slight hill. There was quite a party of us, probably a dozen, mostly lawyers from Urbana [there was no Champaign then], Danville, and Monticello.

"As we reached the old Square and crossed it toward the Oglesby House, Lincoln pointed out the exact spot, at the west side of the square where he stopped when he came with his father's family from Indiana in a wagon 25 [26] years before. He told us that the team was hitched there while his father looked around the town and made some inquiries about the country, with a view to deciding just where they would settle.

"After going to the hotel, and as we still had a good deal of time on our hands, Lincoln suggested that we walk out to the river. This we all did. We sat on a log at the river bank while Lincoln talked about his hopes for the convention."²

Whitney, in relating the same incident, makes no mention of the delegates and others who came to Decatur with Lincoln and accompanied him on his stroll to the river:

"Lincoln was to go from Danville court direct to Bloomington via Decatur, and he and I agreed that I should meet him in Tolono and accompany him; we stopped in Decatur just before night, and put up at a hotel, there being no train north till early next morning. As I remember it now, we did not meet a single chance acquaintance, although this was the county of Lincoln's first residence in Illinois, and where he split the historic 'rails,' although I may add there was more romance than substance about that rail-splitting. Lincoln was not a hard worker.

"After supper we strolled out for a walk, and when we came to the court house, Lincoln walked out a few feet in front, and after shifting his position two or three times, he said, as he looked up at the building, partly to himself and partly to me: 'Here is the exact spot where I stood by our wagon when we moved from Indiana twenty-six years ago; this isn't six feet from the exact spot.'

"He said further to me: 'We came into town and kept on and made our first stop right in front of the court house, where we now are.' I asked him if he, at that time, had expected to be a lawyer and practice law in that court house; to which he replied: 'No, I didn't know I had sense enough to be a lawyer then.' He then told me he had frequently thereafter tried to locate the route by which they had come; and that he had decided that it was near to the line of the main line of the Illinois Central railroad.

"We walked till early bed-time, during which he told me of his early adventures in both Macon and Sangamon counties, the Hanks family, etc.; also his early struggles in life.

"Early the next morning we took the train for Bloomington. . . ."³

A number of Decatur men were on the train that carried Lincoln to Bloomington the next morning for the historical gathering. At an Anti-Nebraska county convention held in Decatur on May 10, at which William H. Herndon had delivered the principal address,⁴ Isaac C. Pugh and William J. Usrey were named delegates to the convention with John Ricketts, Joab Wilkinson, Anderson Froman, John Davis, Warner W. Oglesby, and J. W. Clements as alternates. It is likely others went from Decatur, as Dr. H. C. Johns of Decatur was named at Bloomington to go as a delegate to the Republican Convention to be held in Philadelphia in June.

The Macon County Convention of May 10 recommended William S. Crissey of Decatur to the Bloomington Convention as a suitable candidate for state superintendent of public schools. Crissey was a circuit-riding Methodist minister who had come to Macon County in 1831 and preached for a number of years. In 1851 he was president of the village board of trustees. From 1847 to 1860 he was the county school commissioner, now known as county superintendent. He was serving in the latter capacity when recommended for the state nomination. In the convention, William E. Powell of Peoria was selected as the candidate.

Editor Usrey went to Bloomington on Tuesday to attend a convention of the Grand Temple of Honor and was there

for the early arrival of delegates for the Anti-Nebraska forces convention on Thursday. He deemed the convention of sufficient importance to send a bulletin to his weekly paper timed "10 o'clock" Thursday, May 29. His paper went to press that afternoon. In this early bulletin he said:

"Over one thousand strangers and delegates are here. Delegates from all quarters are pouring in constantly. Governor Reeder, of Kansas, is here, and Col. Lane will be here today. Mrs. Robinson, wife of Governor Robinson, is also here. The greatest enthusiasm prevails. There is one universal 'shriek' against the recent outrages in Kansas. Col. Bissell will receive the nomination for Governor by acclamation."

At three o'clock in the afternoon he sent another bulletin:

"Convention organized — John M. Palmer, President. Col. Bissell nominated for Governor and Francis A. Hoffman, of Chicago, for Lieut. Governor, by acclamation, amidst deafening applause — and continued cheering followed. Speeches were made by Mr. Emery, of Kansas, Hon. Richard Yates, and the President. Enthusiasm greater than in the times of '40."

Decatur Anti-Nebraska forces had to wait until the following week to see what this leader of their forces in Macon County and delegate to the convention had to say about the gathering. He printed the entire "official proceedings" report which made no mention of Lincoln's speech. The only mention of it was in his news report headed, "People's State Convention," in which he said:

"The convention was presided over by Hon. John M. Palmer, of Macoupin, and speeches were made by Messrs. Browning, Wentworth, Sweet, Judd, Lovejoy, Lincoln, Cook, Swett, Farnsworth, Maj. Emory of Kansas, and others."

Usrey also reported: "The other nominations were reported by a committee, of which A. Lincoln was chairman. . . ." He gave a special paragraph to Gov. Reeder's address at night, but Lincoln's speech, now referred to as

the "lost speech" and considered one of the best political addresses Lincoln ever made, apparently made no impression on him.

Six days after the Bloomington convention Lincoln was again in Decatur speaking at the courthouse. The *State Chronicle* reported his speech in one long paragraph:

"Hon. A. Lincoln. — This distinguished gentleman, whose name heads the anti-Nebraska electoral ticket, is already in the field, doing effective service in organizing the friends of Free Labor and Free Speech for the coming conflict with the house-burning, Irish-killing, bludgeon-suasion Slave Oligarchy. He addressed a crowded auditory at the Court House in this city, on yesterday afternoon. His exposition of the fallacies of the Nebraska bill, and the hypocritical attempts of the Administration party to coax old Whigs into the pro-slavery ranks, was a telling one, and produced an excellent effect. Mr. Lincoln will probably be present at the ratification meeting on Saturday, and will again address the people."⁵

Lincoln was not present on Saturday — at least his name is not mentioned in the short account available of the meeting. The *State Chronicle* in announcing the "Grand Rally and Ratification Meeting" to applaud what had been done in Bloomington, said: "The following distinguished speakers have been invited and are expected to be present to address the People: Hon. A. Lincoln, Hon. Richard Yates, Hon. John M. Palmer, and Wm. H. Herndon. Speeches in the afternoon at 1 o'clock, and at night."⁶

The letter of invitation that went to John M. Palmer on June 1, 1856, apparently was written by Usrey, as it was on *Illinois State Chronicle* stationery. It was signed by W. J. Usrey, E. G. Flaconn, John Ricketts, I. C. Pugh, and H. C. Johns and said:

"Dear Sir. If you recollect you promised me at Bloomington to give us a call. We have concluded to have a ratification meeting on Saturday next, during Circuit Court Ses-

sion, and you are earnestly invited to attend, the regular old line Democracy want you here. Mess. [*sic*] Yates, Lincoln, & Herndon will be invited but you must come by all means.”⁷

A week after the ratification meeting, Usrey in his weekly edition reported that Herndon “entertained the audience for several hours, in a forceful and eloquent address, relative to the issues now presented to the country.” Yates sent word that he could not be present.

Usrey avoided the use of the word “Republican” whenever possible, although during the summer he did mention it in connection with a local political club. In the next issue after the Bloomington Convention he carried a list of the Anti-Nebraska candidates on the editorial page under the heading “People’s Ticket” and continued to designate the candidates in that way until just before the election when he changed the designation to “Illinois State Ticket.”

Editorially, he said of the Bloomington convention: “All past party ties are forgotten and held in abeyance for the glorious purpose of a common union against a common foe. The time-honored and choice spirits of Whiggery and the men who formed the flower of the Democratic party in her palmyest days, all were found uniting for the common good.”

After the nomination on June 17 of John C. Fremont and William L. Dayton as the Republican candidates for President and Vice President, Usrey printed the national ticket and electors above the state ticket, but did not give any party designation to the national ticket while continuing to carry the state candidates as the “People’s Ticket.”

Among the electors listed were Abraham Lincoln of Sangamon County and Frederick Hecker of St. Clair as electors for the state at large. William Herndon of Sangamon County was elector for the sixth district.

Lincoln was not in favor of the nomination of Fremont. He preferred Justice John McLean of the United States Supreme Court,⁸ but after Fremont had been named by the convention in Philadelphia, Lincoln supported the ticket. In his many speeches in Illinois he tried to persuade old line

Whigs not to support Fillmore on the American Party ticket but to vote for Fremont.

Lincoln was not long in receiving national party recognition after the Anti-Nebraska editors' meeting in Decatur in February and the Bloomington convention in May. In the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, Lincoln, on an "informal" ballot received 110 votes for vice president and William L. Dayton of New Jersey received 259. Dayton was nominated in the formal balloting.

On June 26 the *Illinois State Chronicle* editorially said under a single line heading, "Abraham Lincoln": "This gentleman received quite a large vote for Vice President, and though he was not exactly the choice of the Convention for President of the Senate, yet Illinois will put him within one of it by making him a member of that body, in place of S. A. Douglas, at the next election. Who says amen to that?"

Lincoln entered the 1856 campaign with fervor, traveling at times by himself to take part in political rallies where local candidates had a share in the talking, and at other times with a group of prominent party men. The Democrats on June 2 in Cincinnati had nominated James Buchanan for President and the American Party (Know-Nothing), composed largely of old-line Whigs, had named Millard Fillmore as its presidential candidate.

Although the name "Republican" did not appear over the party ticket in the *State Chronicle* a "Fremont Republican Club" was organized in Decatur. The old line Whig members had their Fillmore Club. At the organization meeting of the Fillmore Club early in August "on motion of G. A. Smith, Rev. Jonathan Stamper was called to the chair and on motion of G. A. Smith, J. R. Gorin was chosen secretary."⁹ Forty-six handed in their names to become members.

A senatorial convention in the name of the Anti-Nebraska Party was called to meet in Decatur on August 20. In this case neither the "Republican" nor the "People's Party" designation was used in the *State Chronicle*. Editor Usrey was the chairman of the convention at which Isaac C. Pugh of De-

catur, James Curtis of Champaign, and John M. Scott of McLean County were put forward for state senator. Scott was nominated. The senatorial district was composed of McLean, Macon, Shelby, Champaign, DeWitt, Christian, Moultrie, and Piatt counties.

As the northern part of Illinois was considered safe for Fremont, the most vigorous campaigning was done in the central and southern parts of the state. It was September before the state speakers moved into these sections. Lincoln was announced to speak in Monticello on September 17, with John M. Scott, the state senatorial candidate.¹⁰ A rally in Decatur was set for September 24.

Two days before the Decatur "mass meeting," Lincoln was in Salem,¹¹ and on September 23 he addressed a Fremont meeting in Vandalia.¹²

CHAPTER 9

Political Rally

"In the canvass of 1856 Mr. Lincoln made more than fifty speeches, no one of which, so far as he remembers, was put in print."

— Lincoln's Short Autobiography
to John Scripps

On the morning of September 24, 1856, flags were flying from the porches of Decatur homes, a banner was atop the courthouse in the old square, people were arriving from the country on horseback and in wagon. An Illinois Central train arrived at 7:15 A.M. from the south. From it stepped Abraham Lincoln and other political notables, for this was the day of the Fremont rally in Decatur.

Usrey's *Illinois State Chronicle* had announced the mass meeting in prominent type in both the daily and the weekly. The daily had been published since August to give news of the presidential campaign and promote the election of Fremont and Dayton. To his readers Usrey proclaimed:

"MASS MEETING

In Decatur!

"It has been determined to hold a MASS MEETING of the friends of FREMONT and DAYTON, BISSELL and the State Ticket, at Decatur,

"On Wednesday, September 24, 1856.

"Bissell, Trumbull, Lincoln, Yates, Palmer, Wentworth, Browning, Herndon and others of our own state; Anson Burlingame, of Massachusetts; Corwin and Wade of Ohio; Henry S. Lane of Indiana — and other distinguished champions of Freedom, have been invited to be present and are confidently expected.

"Let the friends of Fremont throughout the counties of Macon, Sangamon, Logan, DeWitt, Piatt, Moultrie, Christian and Shelby, make their arrangements to be present on the 24th and devote one day to the cause. Come with banners and music, in wagons or by car-loads, on horseback or a-foot — come one, come all! Let everybody, and his wife and daughter come."

Seven days before the big rally the Decatur Fremont club named a committee on arrangements. The *State Chronicle* announced the committee on September 18, saying:

"In accordance with a resolution of the Fremont club at its last meeting, the following gentlemen have been appointed a Committee on Arrangements for the Mass Meeting on the 24th. They will please consider this an official notification, and are requested to enter at once upon the discharge of their duties:

"S. P. Ohr, Jos. Stickell, E. Morehouse, Fred Brett, S. F. Greer, H. Mendenhall, F. Stommell, Jno. Stickell, Jr., W. S. Crissey, Irving Clement, A. T. Hill, I. D. Jennings, A. Froman, A. J. Sinclair, J. Dowling, Jr., J. Wilkinson, J. Baker, Jno. Lindsey, Wm. Rea, I. S. Pugh, Saml. Shelly, W. A. Barnes."

At the same meeting it was decided that "a banner should be given as a premium to the Precinct in Macon County which will send the largest delegation to Decatur in proportion to population on that day." Also, said the *State Chronicle*, "it has been determined by some of the friends of the cause to prepare a Barbeque for the occasion," and "A Fremont Glee Club will be organized in a few days and will be ready by the 24th to discourse sweet music as an appropriate accessory to the eloquence of the distinguished speakers who will be with us on that occasion."

The rally was typical of the times: an all-day affair with speaking in the daytime and at night. The committee on arrangements had tried and failed to get a band but a fife and drum corps was engaged as a substitute. The parade

formed in front of the Humphrey House in the 400 block of East Eldorado Street, moved through the business section, and then east across the Illinois Central tracks to a grove south of William Street.¹

William Bross of the *Chicago Democratic Press*, Colonel J. C. Vaughn of the *Chicago Tribune*, and "Long John" Wentworth spoke in the morning. The crowd was disappointing, there being only about 1,500 persons present. While Decatur had a population at that time of 3,650, only 700 were voters, there being 1,500 women and 1,350 persons less than twenty years of age. The population of the county was 8,365. Trains were operating north, south, west, and as far east as Tolono. However, people were accustomed to traveling by wagon or horseback to political rallies.

The political speeches of those days were long and replete with catchy phrases. Candidates spoke three or four times a week, Lincoln himself making some fifty speeches in the 1856 campaign. Just before the Decatur rally he was speaking almost every day.

The picnic dinner was served in the grove as planned but Lincoln, Senator Trumbull, and other speakers dined at the home of Dr. H. C. Johns in the 400 block of East North Street. "We had as guests that day," Mrs. Johns wrote in her *Recollections*, "the gentlemen who were to speak in the afternoon, and while the others drew together to discuss the news of the day, Mr. Lincoln took my Fanny on his knee, put one arm around Corwin and told them stories for half an hour. Twice before this we had entertained Mr. Lincoln in our home on the farm."²

Senator Trumbull was the first speaker in the afternoon and was followed by Lincoln, who spoke "briefly." At early candlelight the meeting was continued in the courthouse. It seems likely that Lincoln left after the afternoon session for there was to be a big Fremont rally in Springfield the following day.³

"I can remember the fiery eloquence of Owen Lovejoy and the sarcastic wit of 'Long John' Wentworth, but Mr.

Lincoln's speech seems to have left no impression,"⁴ said Mrs. Johns. Lovejoy spoke at the courthouse at night following the regular rally speakers.

Editor Usrey gave the Decatur mass meeting nearly two columns in the daily *State Chronicle* the next day and carried the same account in the weekly issue. It is presented here in full as a sample of the style of journalism in those days. The editor was in sympathy with what was being said; he combined editorial comment while reporting the news with the following result:

"THE MEETING YESTERDAY

"Was one which cheered the heart of every lover of his country who was present, and the good results of which will be exhibited in no doubtful aspect in the vote of Macon county next November. We think we cannot be accused of exaggeration by any fair minded man when we estimate the number present on the grounds yesterday at 1500. We confess our regret that the crowd was not greater, for we would have been better pleased to have seen every voter in the county there, no matter what his political sentiments. But the number was fully as great as was anticipated by any of those engaged in preparing for the meeting, and though we would have preferred 10,000 to 1500, there was no disappointment in this respect.

"The early morning gave tokens of preparation for the day in the numberless flags which could be seen floating from the house-tops in every part of the city, many of them inscribed with appropriate mottoes. Some disappointment was occasioned by the failure to obtain a band, but very martial music was improvised for the occasion, and to the stirring music of the drum and fife, the procession was formed near the Humphrey House, and proceeded through the principal streets to the grove east of town. The display of banners and flags in the procession and along the route was very fine, those especially receiving attention being the one gotten up by the Fremont Club of Decatur, and one pre-

pared by young Bunnell, with a wounded 'Buck' as the chief design.

"Arriving at the grounds, the meeting was organized by calling Dr. H. C. Johns to the chair, who introduced as the first speaker, Mr. Bross, the editor of the Chicago 'Democratic Press,' who, in his brief speech of half an hour, enchaind the attention of the audience with a clear analysis of the principles and purposes of the party which assumes to itself the name of 'Democratic.' Col. Vaughn of the Chicago 'Tribune,' was next introduced, who commented more especially upon the effects of slavery upon the white race with whom it comes in contact, and upon the strength and designs of the slave Propagandists, of which his residence for years in South Carolina well qualified him to speak. Col. Vaughn is an impressive speaker, and his remarks carried conviction to the minds of many who have heretofore doubted. Mr. Wentworth, well known everywhere as 'Long John,' next entertained the audience with one of his scathing speeches, exposing the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of the sham Democracy. His illustrations of the sudden shiftings of the party was irresistible, and received with shouts of laughter and applause.

"At the conclusion of Mr. Wentworth's speech, dinner was announced, and the audience moved to the tables which were loaded with the fat things of the land. Though the crowd occupied every foot of space within the reach of the tables, there was no jostling or rush, such as sometimes disgraces such occasions, but the most perfect order and propriety was observed, and the wants of all were well supplied. To the committee who had charge of the dinner arrangement, much credit is due for the manner in which they discharged their duties.

"After dinner the speaking was again resumed, and when the President introduced Hon. Lyman Trumbull, the cheers and applause which greeted his appearance testified the hold he has upon the affections of the People of Illinois, and to his claim to the title of 'Illinois' faithful Senator.' We

shall not attempt to give even a sketch of his address. It was masterly, logical, convincing, overwhelming. His exposure of the sophistries of the Nebraska party, and his dissection of that master of sophistry, humbug and deceit — Stephen A. Douglas — excited universal admiration. It was none the less complete because brief, nor did it lack finish because destitute of abuse and blackguardism, such as the 'Little Giant' is accustomed to indulge in with regard to Mr. Trumbull. It was done without ferocity, but every stroke went to the vitals. We wish that every man who has ever listened to the defiant menaces, reckless assertions, and gross abuse, with which Mr. Douglas is wont to recreate himself on the stump, and witnessed the unblushing effrontery with which he coins lies from the exhaustless mint of his brain, and issues them as facts, could have been present to hear Judge Trumbull's speech, and contrast the two Senators.

"When Senator Trumbull had concluded Mr. Lincoln came forward and gave a brief exhortation to the Fillmore men. This is a work for which he is peculiarly qualified, by reason of his long connection with the Whig party, from which the Fillmore strength is derived, and from the implicit confidence which is placed in 'the man' by all who know him — and who in Macon county does not know and respect Abe Lincoln? Commendation of his brief speech yesterday would be superfluous in this community.

"This concluded the exercises on the grounds, and after rousing cheers for Fremont and Bissell, the audience dispersed, a portion of the procession reforming and marching into town, giving occasional vent to their enthusiasm by cheers and shouts.

"At candle-light, the court-house was crowded to its utmost capacity to listen to a speech from L. Weldon, Esq., of Clinton. We believe we express the feelings of almost all present when we say that they were surprised and delighted with Mr. Weldon's speech. He is but a young man, and is still younger in the Fremont ranks, being a recent 'come-outer' from the Democracy, and while we expected a good speech, we were not prepared for such an able, triumphant

effort, as we listened to. Every point was made with precision, and his occasional humorous illustrations were of the most happy character. At the conclusion of his remarks, it was announced that Owen Lovejoy was in the house, and in response to the vociferous cries of the audience, the 'notorious abolitionist' came forward, and was introduced as the 'beast with seven heads and ten horns,' of whom we had heard so much from the Democratic stump-orators. There is no man in the Fremont ranks in this State against whom there has been a more studied attempt to create prejudice, and thereby occasion detriment to the Republican cause than this same Lovejoy, who revealed himself in all his deformity, to the citizens of Decatur, last night. No one who heard him has any fears that their slander and abuse will have any effect where he goes to counteract its influence. His speech was irresistible, and he enlisted the entire sympathies and approbation of the crowded audience, who testified their feelings by the most enthusiastic shouts which have been heard within those walls for many a year.

"We have made but a meagre allusion to the various speeches made, and were we to attempt a more full report, could not but give a faint idea of their excellence. There was, no doubt, the best array of speakers here which has been assembled at any county meeting, and their labor told.

"There was one feature of the occasion to which we refer with especial pride. Not a drunk or disorderly man was upon the grounds and the most perfect order and attention was exhibited. The assemblage was composed of sober, intelligent, thinking men of our town and county, upon whom the work of perpetuating our free institutions must resolve. The enthusiasm created in the breasts of such men will not abate, but will deepen and widen until it will culminate in a united and resistless effort to place old Macon right in the record of the great contest for liberty. So mote it be."⁵

The day was not without its unscheduled incidents, among them a clash at the courthouse. Buchanan supporters were out early to make the most of the day for their own

candidate. They went to the courthouse and hung their banner from a window and from another window their Buck's Horns. From the cupola they stretched a rope from which they suspended their flag.

A couple of Fremont supporters did not propose to be outdone by the Buchaneers, as the *State Chronicle* called them, and climbed to the top of the courthouse despite all the Buchanan men could do. There they suspended their Fremont flag above that of Buchanan flag, where it stayed all day.

Said the *State Chronicle*: "John C. Fremont placed the flag of his country nearer the clouds than any man before him, and his followers are not content to place his banner beneath that of the old foggy of Wheatland."⁶

At night while Lovejoy was talking in the courthouse, eggs came through a window, spattering men and women in the audience. Lovejoy was not hit and the Fremont supporters expressed regret that there were "such shameless rowdies in our midst."⁷

On the day following the Fremont rally Usrey printed on the front page of his daily *Chronicle* the platform adopted by the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia in June. On the editorial page the national ticket and the Illinois state electors still were without a political designation.

Within a week another mass meeting in the interest of Fremont and Dayton and the state ticket was announced for October 13. The Democrats, with Stephen A. Douglas as the speaker, were to have a rally on Saturday, October 11. Quite naturally the Democrats wanted a bigger crowd than was present for the Fremont rally, and the *Chronicle* conceded it was "quite large."

Douglas arrived in Decatur the day previous and stopped at the Cassell House on the Old Square. The *Chronicle* contains the only report now available of the meeting, and since Usrey was not a Democrat he did not give the meeting much space. We can imagine that James Shoaff in his Democratic *Gazette* gave the rally for James Buchanan as great a

send-off as Usrey gave the Fremont rally.

Judge Douglas and two or three others made speeches in front of the Cassell House the night before the rally. Among the speakers was Tevis Greathouse, editor of the *Decatur Observer*. He talked at length and Usrey remarked that he talked loud enough for him to hear from his office door a half block away.⁸

Of the Democratic rally on October 11, the *Chronicle* said:

"The demonstration on Saturday was quite large. Every precinct in the county had been thoroughly drummed and all wagons, men, women and children that could be brought into the procession were on hand. . . .

"The demonstration was characterized by more disorder and drunkenness than any public gathering ever held in this county before, so much so that Douglas, while speaking, found it necessary to rebuke his drunken friends, and then meanly charged that they were Fremont abolitionists."⁹

On election day Buchanan received in the nation 1,838,169 votes; Fremont, 1,341,264; and Fillmore, 874,534. Illinois went for Buchanan with a vote of 105,344, Fremont received 96,180, and Fillmore, 37,451. In Macon County, Buchanan led with 821 votes although the Fremont vote, plus the 394 given Fillmore, outnumbered that of the Democrats.

In the state, Bissell, heading the Republican ticket for governor, was elected with 111,372 votes, while Richardson, Democrat, received 106,643, and Merris on the American Party ticket received only 19,242.

After the election Editor Usrey still did not see Lincoln as presidential timber, for on November 27 he said editorially regarding Fremont:

"Our candidate is a model candidate, and made a glorious race, you may bet on him in 1860, he is bound to win. Let the Fremont party keep clear of entangling alliances for the next four years and success is ours."

Success came in 1860 but not with Fremont. It was with Lincoln, the Fremont presidential elector in Illinois in 1856.

CHAPTER 10

Debate Echoes

"Lincoln is the strong man of his party, the best stump speaker in the West."

— Stephen A. Douglas

On the morning of July 19, 1858, Editor Usrey entered his newspaper office determined to write a letter to Abe Lincoln. He did not want to be considered as meddling in Lincoln's political strategy, but he had been talking with a farmer who presented an idea he thought would help Lincoln in his campaign against Stephen A. Douglas for the United States Senate, and Usrey wanted to pass the idea on to Lincoln.

Following the 1856 presidential campaign Lincoln devoted himself for the next year to his law practice which did not include Macon County. He delivered few speeches and did not engage very strenuously in political activity until the fall of 1857 when Douglas broke with the majority of his Democratic Party over the constitution for Kansas and the question of slavery in that territory.

By the spring of 1858 it was evident that the Republicans would depend upon Lincoln to oppose Douglas' bid for re-election, and on June 16, 1858, the Republican Convention in Springfield selected Lincoln officially as the candidate. On the night after the nomination, Lincoln delivered his famous "house divided" speech in Springfield. The struggle that had been developing with intensity ever since 1854 broke in full force. Douglas left his home in Washington and started west, arriving in Chicago on July 9.

That night Douglas spoke from the balcony of the Tre-

mont House while Lincoln sat nearby and listened. The next night Lincoln spoke from the same balcony. Douglas moved downstate on a special train. Wherever Douglas spoke, handbills announced that Lincoln would reply. It continued that way for several days. Then Editor Usrey decided to write that letter. Pulling out a sheet of stationery with "Macon County Republican Central Committee" across the top and under the words, "Secretary's Office," he wrote:

"Decatur, Ill., July 10, 1858

"Hon A. Lincoln

"Dear Sir:

"In talking with an old Farmer, who is strong for a man by the name of Lincoln he used the following Language: 'Douglas is taking Advantage of Lincoln, he gets his friends to give him Receptions, Visits a place with a sort of Napoleon air, like that of a conqueror, takes the field, Ostensibly to defend his course really to make votes for U.S.S. he takes the crowd in the day time, when he is through The trains carry off the Douglasites while Lincoln talks to Confirmed Republican(s), who hold over. Or in other words Douglas takes the crowd & Lincoln takes the leavings.' This is the substance of his Language, and contains a hint too good to be lost. If Douglas desires to Canvass the State let him act the honorable part by agreeing to meet you in regular Debate, giving a fair opportunity to all to hear both sides.

"You will please excuse this meddling, with your Business. My only excuse is that your business in this particular case is mine also. It struck me at the time that I heard the remark — alluded to — that Mr. Douglas was rather getting the start of you, and that if you would make a proposition for a Canvass immediately, you could stop the prestige of these triumphal entrys which he is making. You can have no excuse nor can your friends — for giving you Public Receptions — Mr. Douglas has this excuse and will use it against you.

"Yours Resp

"W. J. Usrey"¹

Five days later, on July 24, 1858, Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of debates. Did the Usrey letter cause Lincoln to take that action? The letter remained unknown until the summer of 1947 when the Robert Todd Lincoln collection of Lincoln Papers was opened to the public in the Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. It may have been an important factor in bringing about the famous debates.

On the same day that Usrey was writing his letter to Lincoln, Ansel Tupper of Decatur was writing to Lincoln asking that he come to Decatur and make an address:

“Decatur, July 19, 1858

“Hon A. Lincoln

“Dear Sir:

“It is the general wish of our citizens that you should visit our place this week, if you can make it convenient to do so, and talk to them upon the political questions of the day. It is decidedly important that we should send a member from this district to the legislature this winter; which I think can be done if we only commence the work in season. We have a very large number of Americans in this County, and at this present time are nearly equally divided. I have no doubt that with their vote we should be able to elect our member; hence the importance of commencing the work, and more particularly at this time, for the reason that there has been an attempt made here during the last week to cajole the American Whigs by the distribution of some cart loads of Crittendens Speeches under Douglasses frank.

“I think that if the old Whigs here could be talked to immediately a very favorable impression might be made to counteract the insidious side workings of Douglasses little Satellites who are continually flashing their sickly light in our midst. I have understood that quite a number of Democratic speeches will be made here during the week. And as our court will be pretty generally attended by the community at Large, it seems to me, that it will be a very advantageous occasion, from the opportunity it will afford to talk to the people living in the Country, who are not gen-

erally very well posted, and for that reason more than any other, they have been made the willing prey of the designing demagogues, who have been fed from the public canals leading from the public treasury, have been able to flood the country with false doctrines and lying documents.

"If you can come please inform me at your earliest opportunity, and I will see that due notice is given in all the precincts, and that an effort is made to bring out the old American Whigs or also Whigs and Americans.

"Very Respectfully

"Ansel Tupper²

"Hon A. Lincoln

"Springfield, Ill."

Lincoln did not come to Decatur to make an address. Six days after he issued the debate challenge to Douglas, final arrangements were completed in the home of Francis E. Bryant in Bement, twenty-five miles east of Decatur. The three previous days had been busy ones, with Lincoln in and out of Decatur making train connections for Clinton and Monticello where he had speaking engagements.

On Tuesday, July 27, Lincoln left Springfield and went on to Clinton where Douglas spoke in the afternoon; Lincoln was in the audience. That evening Lincoln spoke in Clinton. The next day Lincoln dined with Douglas, probably in Decatur³ as Douglas was traveling from Clinton to Monticello and Lincoln was on his way to Springfield from Clinton, Decatur being the best railroad connection point for all three towns.

On Thursday, the 29th, Lincoln returned through Decatur on the Great Western, going to Bement and thence by carriage to Monticello where he was to reply to a speech by Douglas. The two men met on the road between Bement and Monticello and arranged to meet in Bement that night in the Bryant home. There they concluded arrangements for the debates. After midnight Lincoln left for Springfield on the Great Western through Decatur.

The Lincoln-Douglas debate closest to Decatur was in

Charleston, Illinois, on September 18, 1858. Richard J. Oglesby of Decatur, a candidate for Congress that year, was present. Oglesby's Democratic opponent was James C. Robinson, with whom he was having a series of joint debates. Oglesby had been touring the southern counties of his district making many speeches and came into Charleston for the Lincoln-Douglas debate and a Republican rally that night.

Three days after the Charleston debate, in a letter to his law partner, Sheridan Wait, Oglesby wrote:

"The meeting in Charleston on Saturday between Douglas and Lincoln was the most full and complete triumph of the latter in the speeches, the crowds, the turnout and the sympathy, I have ever seen. Lincoln's last speech was absolutely terrible and Douglas so felt it that he writhed and winced and at last left the stand in bad humor.

"The turnout was grand. A large car drawn by four yellow steeds and containing thirty-two splendidly dressed young ladies, had on one side the motto, 'Westward the star of empire takes its way: We link-on to Lincoln, mothers were for Clay; on the other side: 'Lincoln-Oglesby-Marshall-Crad-dock.' This was the feature of the day and all eyes were upon it. The friends of Douglas had one but it was a poor affair. . . .

"At night Linder, Merrick, Robinson and Lawrence with a large crowd took the courthouse at 7. Alone I began a speech in the yard to 200 of the faithful. In thirty minutes I had 500 and in one hour, 1,000. The crowd all left the courthouse and I felt that four out of five were for me. It was intensely exciting and I spoke for two hours and ten minutes."⁴

Oglesby had entered the campaign for Congress as an independent but soon was on strong Republican ground. The seventh congressional district usually was Democratic by 4,000 to 5,000 votes but Oglesby was defeated by only 1,800 votes, Robinson receiving 13,588, and Oglesby, 11,760.

Lincoln closed that famous campaign of 1858 with a speech in Powers Hall on East Main Street in Decatur on

Monday night, November 1, the day before the election, although in Springfield on the previous Saturday, October 30, he had said in his address, "My friends, today closes the discussions of this canvass."⁵

"The weather was unpleasant, a heavy rain falling, but the crowd was there," said Dewitt C. Shockley in 1909, speaking of the Powers Hall address. "After the meeting had adjourned, a number of his friends went with him to the Revere House on Franklin Street and were with him until after midnight. I don't remember who was in the group at the hotel that night. I was there but I can't recall who besides Lincoln was in the party.

"That particular night all the men who went to the hotel after the meeting were Republicans, but the Democrats were among his warmest personal friends. There were Sherry Wait, Jasper J. Peddecord, Henry and William Prather, Steve Whitehouse, all Democrats."⁶

In the legislative election, Daniel Stickel, Republican of DeWitt County, was elected to the House from the thirty-sixth district (Macon, DeWitt, Piatt, Champaign) and cast his vote for Lincoln for United States Senator. Joel S. Post, Democrat of Decatur, in the state senate from the sixteenth district (Macon, DeWitt, Piatt, Champaign, Moultrie, Christian, Shelby, McLean) cast his vote for Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas being elected 54 to 46.

Throughout 1859 the Decatur *State Chronicle* reported Lincoln's activities. In April Lincoln's letter to the Republicans of Massachusetts celebrating Jefferson's birthday was published in full. In June the *Chicago Journal* editorial, suggesting that A. Lincoln's name be added to those being considered for the next Republican governor of Illinois, was published. In September there were dispatches about Lincoln in Ohio and the *Chicago Journal's* dispatch on Lincoln's reception in Cincinnati.

Decatur was being kept informed about Lincoln although Editor Usrey was still not saying anything about Lincoln being presidential timber.

CHAPTER 11

Unanimous Choice

“First choice of Illinois for the presidency . . .”
— Illinois Republican Convention Resolution

The Illinois Republican state central committee meeting in Springfield, February 8, 1860, decided that the state convention should be held in Decatur on May 23. There is reason to believe the committee wanted the convention in a section of the state where Lincoln sentiment was strong. No other explanation has been offered with the exception that Decatur was centrally located.

There was good railroad service by the Great Western (Wabash) and the Illinois Central, yet Decatur had a population of only 3,849. It is little wonder that the *Chicago Press & Tribune* on February 10, two days after the central committee made its selection, doubted that the town could handle the convention and suggested there was time to change since the official call had not yet been made.

The *Press & Tribune* in the same editorial acknowledged “the fitness of Decatur for the honor of entertaining the convention, but it behooves her citizens to put forth such efforts in the premises as shall make people feel they are invited to it, and not repelled from it, by the circumstances relating to their accomodations.”¹

The *Central Illinois Gazette*, published in West Urbana (Champaign), probably prompted by the *Press & Tribune* editorial, five days later also raised the question of Decatur’s being able to handle the convention. The *Gazette* was edited

and published by William O. Stoddard, who in December, 1859, in an editorial on "Who Shall Be The Next President?" had said: "No man will be so sure to consolidate the party vote of the State or will carry the great Mississippi Valley with a more irresistible rush of popular enthusiasm as our distinguished fellow citizen, Abraham Lincoln."

The *Gazette's* editorial about the convention site commented:

"The locality of Decatur is central, and very easy of access, but we have very serious doubts whether the town will be able to provide suitable accomodations for the crowds of guests, not to speak of the six hundred delegates, who will be drawn together by that convention. With all deference to the wisdom of the committee it strikes us that they have certainly laid out as much work as any one convention should be called upon to attend to. The mingling of State with National affairs does not seem to be a very fortunate arrangement.² There is reason to fear that one or the other will usurp an undue share of attention to the detriment of important interests."³

Two days later the *Chicago Press & Tribune* was convinced that Decatur could handle the convention. "Our friends at Decatur assure us ample arrangements will be made to secure the comfort of delegates and others who may attend the State Republican Convention, to be held at that place in May next," said an editorial. "Whether the number be one thousand or ten thousand, all will be taken care of. The Republicans of that enterprising town are large hearted, hospitable men, and we doubt not they will make this promise entirely good. They are in high feather just now on account of the consideration given to their place by the State Committee. Last Saturday night they held an enthusiastic mass meeting and will hold another tomorrow night. We think the committee did well in determining to hold the convention at Decatur."⁴

Although the state convention had been tentatively set for May 23 the actual date and official call were held up pending the selection of the date for the National Convention. It was

not until March 9 that the call was issued for the convention to convene in Decatur at ten o'clock on the morning of May 9, 1860. No issues of Decatur papers of the convention period have been found to give account of how the city organized to handle all the details.

The political situation at the time has been dealt with by many scholars and historians. Suffice it to say here that there were four leading candidates seeking the Republican nomination for President — William H. Seward of New York, Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, and Edward Bates of Missouri. Lincoln had been mentioned as a candidate for several months but he gave little encouragement to those working for him. Late in 1859 Jesse Fell of Bloomington, Illinois, a member of the Republican state central committee, felt that Lincoln's chances were so good that he asked Lincoln for a sketch of his life, which Lincoln provided.

There was a meeting early in 1860 in the office of Ozias M. Hatch, secretary of state, in the state capitol in Springfield. Besides Hatch there were present: Leonard Swett, Jesse K. Dubois, Lawrence Weldon, A. C. Babcock, William Butler, John Bunn, Ebenezer Peck, Jackson Grimshaw, Ward H. Lamon, and other Republican leaders. Lincoln was asked if his name could be used as a candidate for nomination. Lincoln authorized it, if the committee thought it proper.⁵

Lincoln's political friends went to work in earnest. Seward had a strong following in the northern counties of Illinois where many county conventions refrained from endorsing Lincoln.⁶ At first, Lincoln thought he scarcely had a chance in the Chicago convention but Judge David Davis, Richard Oglesby, Jesse W. Fell, John M. Palmer, and others were more optimistic and wanted the endorsement of his candidacy by the Illinois convention as the first essential step in his campaign.

Comparatively few in Decatur during March and April thought much about the national political situation. The majority was concerned with housing the state convention

and its delegates. Citizens were thrilled that the city was to be host to the biggest political gathering in its history. There were those, however, who believed another political drama was about to be staged. They recalled the Anti-Nebraska editors' meeting in Decatur in 1856 when Lincoln entered a new political party.

Richard J. Oglesby was one Decatur man who realized that what the state convention did with regard to Lincoln would have much to do with the action of the National Convention in Chicago the following week. He fully expected Lincoln to be endorsed at the Decatur convention, but he was not taking any chances by leaving anything undone that could be done to make the endorsement certain and impressive.

Oglesby had the assistance of men like Usrey, editor of the Decatur *State Chronicle*, but neither Oglesby nor Usrey were delegates to the state convention. Others might do the voting for Macon County but Oglesby would do the steering. It was Oglesby who would set the scene for two demonstrations for Lincoln before the convention was many hours old.

The immediate task for the citizens was to organize. Homes must be opened for the housing of delegates and visitors. The hotels could accommodate most of the political leaders of the state, the press, and other distinguished visitors. As there was no hall big enough to accommodate a convention, some kind of temporary structure had to be erected. This task was placed in the hands of a committee which gave Dewitt C. Shockley, the city's leading contractor, the job of construction.

The structure was to be located in South State Street, occupying not only the street but vacant lots on either side. It was to face South Park Street and would provide an enclosure one hundred feet wide and seventy feet deep with a platform at the back. This was to be the Republican Wigwam, large enough to accommodate 2,500 persons. The name "Wigwam" had been used in New York and had been later picked up by Chicago papers.

Lumber was scarce and expensive. Enough was secured, however, to make seats, a platform, and to provide posts to hold up the canvas roof. Oglesby rented a big tent from a circus company and this provided the top covering and the sidewalls, with the exception of the east side which was the outside wall of a building. It was not a very pretentious convention hall but it served the purpose and housed an historic event.

On May 4 the *Springfield Illinois State Journal's* Decatur correspondent, who signed himself "Viator," wrote for his paper:

"Our citizens are all alive preparing for the convention to be held here on the 9th inst. They are now engaged in building a Wigwam sufficiently large to accommodate not only the delegates, but all 'outsiders' who may honor us with their presence. The Wigwam will be provided with seats; those intended for the delegates arranged in Congressional districts, and counties duly labelled. (Our rural friends in Springfield can find their places easily.)

"There will be nine halls prepared, so that each Congressional District can hold separate meetings for the transaction of business.

"The delegates by applying to the reception committee at the Wigwam will be furnished boarding tickets for such as cannot find accommodations at the hotels. The hotels are fitting up rooms in various parts of the city for lodging visitors. Eating houses are well prepared to feed the multitude, and no man need go away dissatisfied, unless he fails to make his wants known.

"Editors are requested to report to the Chronicle county room, where they will be shown to a room prepared for their convenience in writing and making their reports.

"Among the sights which will greet your eyes will be a lot of rails, mauled out of Burr Oak and Walnut, thirty years ago, by old Abe Lincoln and John Hanks, of this county. They are still sound and firm, like the man that made them. Shall we not elect the Rail Mauler President?

His rails, like his political record, are straight, sound and out of good timber.

“Viator”⁷

Four days before the convention the *State Journal* printed this clipping from the *Decatur Magnet*:

“On Wednesday next the Republican State Convention will assemble in this city. It is believed that it will be largely attended; therefore we may expect to see a tremendous crowd of people during the session. So far as we know, ample preparations have been made at our hotels, boarding houses and private residences to entertain the delegates in a becoming manner. We are glad to know that our citizens, irrespective of politics, have consented to throw open their doors and ‘take the strangers in.’ This is right. It will reflect a credit upon our young city that will not soon be forgotten by those who may be in attendance. A large ‘wigwam’ is to be erected for the use of the members. We feel that after the Convention closes and the delegates return home, they will remember Decatur for the hospitality they received during the stay with us.”⁸

Delegates and visitors began arriving in Decatur on Monday, May 7, although the convention was not to open until Wednesday. On Monday night the trains left Springfield on the Great Western “packed full,” said the *Springfield State Journal*. On Tuesday the *Chicago Press & Tribune* correspondent sent a special dispatch declaring “the town is overflowing with delegates. The citizens are receiving them cordially. The convention will be nearly unanimous for Lincoln for President, and the delegates to the Chicago convention will probably be instructed for him. The central and Southern counties are opposed to Seward. . . .”⁹

On Wednesday the *Central Illinois Gazette* correspondent wrote: “For two days past the town has been filling up, testing, even before this moment, the utmost capacity of hotel and private accommodations.”¹⁰ “Viator” wrote for the *Springfield State Journal*:

“This thriving city is now the theater towards which the eyes of the intelligent voters, of all parties, in our state are turned. It would surprise you to see how large a turn out of live Republicans throng its busy streets. The crowd began assembling on Monday when the advance guard reached here, and every train that has since arrived, has contributed its quota, filling the city to its utmost capacity. The hotels and restaurants are, of course, reaping a rich harvest. Hundreds who could not obtain lodging with them, have been taken to private homes — the citizens generally, without distinction of party, throwing open their doors and giving a cordial welcome to strangers.”¹¹

Lincoln arrived from Springfield on Tuesday, May 8, with John Moses and N. M. Knapp of Winchester, Illinois. Moses and Knapp were delegates and had stopped over in Springfield to consult with Springfield men who had done a great deal of the preliminary work of the Decatur convention with a view to the nomination of Lincoln at the Chicago convention. Knapp was a close friend and adviser of Lincoln and Lincoln had acknowledged himself indebted to Knapp for valuable suggestions and aid in 1854.¹²

Moses related later that the three men “being unable to find stopping places, got rooms at the Junction House and not caring for the speaking, the fireworks and hurrah at the Wigwam, we spent the evening together at the hotel, and a pleasant as well as memorable evening it was. Lincoln and Knapp slept together in one bed, and soon after retiring, either of them being rather long for the bedstead, an attempt to turn over by one of them resulted in letting them down on the floor. On jumping up, Knapp exclaimed, ‘Well Lincoln, I guess we shall have to reconstruct our platform!’ which pleased Old Abe very much. He told it to a great many the next day as a good thing.

“It was to Knapp that Mr. Lincoln replied when asked if he intended to go to the Chicago convention, that ‘he did not know whether he was too much of a candidate to go or not enough of a candidate to stay away.’ ”¹³

A heavy rain fell on May 8,¹⁴ the day Lincoln arrived. The rain did not help Decatur's dirt streets but did freshen the new square (Central Park) in front of the Wigwam and where, just the year before at the request of businessmen, trees had been planted and the grounds made more attractive.

A two-horse wagon arrived from the East with several young men from Tuscola. They had driven across the prairie with Archibald Van Deren who conducted the Tuscola House in his home town. In the group was a young man named Joe Cannon, who later was to serve many terms as Speaker of the House of Representatives in Washington. As the wagon neared the Macon House, Van Deren saw Lincoln and shouted: "Howdy, Abe." "Howdy, Arch," came back the answer from Lincoln.¹⁵

Prior to his locating in Tuscola Van Deren had lived in Springfield in the neighborhood where Lincoln lived and was a warm personal friend. His Tuscola hotel was located at Houghton and Main Streets and it was there that Mrs. Van Deren conducted the first Sunday School in Tuscola, the date being the second Sunday in September, 1859.

On a train arriving at two o'clock in the morning of the day the convention convened was Orville Hickman Browning of Quincy. Browning went to the Macon House where he got a "small, hard bed" and "slept little."¹⁶ Although Browning was to do much in the coming months for the election of Lincoln, the two-day convention just ahead of him was to be rather disturbing, inasmuch as Browning's first choice for the Republican nomination in the National Convention was Judge Edward Bates of Missouri.¹⁷

Convention day dawned "pleasant but somewhat cool."¹⁸ The audience space in the Wigwam filled early, and crowds milled around outside for the "largest gathering of its class ever held in Illinois"¹⁹ to get underway. At ten o'clock Hon. Jackson Grimshaw, member of the State Central Committee, called the convention to order. When the delegates were seated there was only one vacant space: there were no delegates from Pulaski County.

Grimshaw's remarks were brief and at his suggestion,

John M. Palmer of Macoupin County was called to preside as temporary chairman. Judge Palmer went to the platform amid great applause and thanked the convention delegates for the honor accorded him. Samuel Willard of McLean County, W. C. Flagg of Madison, and W. L. Church of Cook, were appointed secretaries *pro tem*, completing the temporary organization. The Rev. T. M. Oviatt of the Decatur Presbyterian Church offered prayer and the convention was ready to proceed with its business.

The call of the counties showed 700 delegates present casting 636 votes. For Macon County, Herman Lieb, Ansel Tupper, Samuel Gillespie, Jacob Wilkinson, and V. P. Fobes were the official delegates casting the county's five votes.

A committee on permanent organization of one member from each of the nine congressional districts was named²⁰ and the convention took a recess for dinner. By that time it was estimated 3,000 had crowded into the Wigwam and between 1,000 and 2,000 were standing outside.

The convention reassembled at two o'clock. It was a memorable afternoon, one that was to give the presidential campaign a slogan that has lived to this day. Thomas J. Turner of Stephenson County, chairman of the committee on permanent organization, reported for the committee. Joseph Gillespie of Madison County was nominated for permanent president of the convention along with nine vice presidents and five secretaries.²¹

George T. Brown of Madison County and Thomas Turner of Freeport, escorted Gillespie to the platform where his brief acceptance speech was followed by rounds of applause. Oglesby was on his feet at once. The time was right for the first Lincoln demonstration. Lincoln was squatting or sitting on his heels just within the Wigwam door.²² Oglesby addressed the chairman: "I am informed that a distinguished citizen of Illinois, and one whom Illinois will ever delight to honor, is present, and I wish to move that this body invite him to a seat on the stand." Oglesby paused. The great audience waited. Then Oglesby shouted, "Abraham Lincoln."

“Not a shout but a roar of applause, long and deep, shook every board and joist of the Wigwam,” wrote Ward H. Lamon. “The motion was seconded and passed. A rush was made for the hero who sat on his heels. He was seized and jerked to his feet. An effort was made to ‘jam him through the crowd’ to his place of honor on the stage; but the crowd was too dense, and it failed. Then he was ‘troosted’ — lifted up bodily — and lay for a few seconds sprawling and kicking upon the heads and shoulders of the great throng. In this manner he was gradually pushed forward to the stand, and finally reached it, doubtless to his great relief, ‘in the arms of some half dozen gentlemen’; who set him down in the full view of his clamorous admirers. ‘The cheering was like the roar of the sea.’ Hats were thrown by the Chicago delegation, as if hats were no longer useful.”²³

Lincoln acknowledged the cheers and sank into a chair. Oglesby had scored with his first demonstration.

The chairman called for nominations of candidates for governor. Turner of Stephenson County nominated Leonard Swett of McLean County. J. T. Eccles of Montgomery County nominated Richard Yates of Morgan County. T. D. Murphy nominated Norman B. Judd of Cook County. An informal ballot was taken showing Judd, 245; Yates, 183; Swett, 191; and 12 for James Knox.

As the convention prepared to take the first formal ballot, Dick Oglesby arose again. He declared there was an old Democrat outside who had something he wished to present to the convention. It was a peculiar time to interrupt the convention proceedings but it seems likely the presiding officer, Joseph Gillespie, knew what Oglesby was talking about. “What is it? What is it?” asked some as others shouted, “Receive it! Receive it!” A vote was taken and the chairman ordered that the “old Democrat” be allowed to enter.

John Hanks, who had been instrumental in bringing Lincoln to Illinois and had been a Democrat all his life, entered the Wigwam with Isaac Jennings, each of them carrying a fence rail with a banner stretched between on which was this inscription:

“Abraham Lincoln
“The Rail Candidate

“Two rails from a lot of 3,000 made in 1830 by Thos. Hanks and Abe Lincoln, whose father was the first pioneer of Macon County.”²⁴

Pandemonium reigned. The burst of applause became a wild acclaim. The roar was deafening. If there was ever any doubt about the convention being for Lincoln, it was now removed. The demonstration continued to grow. Lincoln was called for a speech. When the crowd quieted down Lincoln declared that he and John Hanks had split rails but he did not know whether he had made those particular rails or not, and jokingly pointed out that he did not think they were a credit to the maker. However, he said, he had made rails in the past but thought he could make better ones now.

Oglesby had scored again with a second demonstration for Lincoln in one afternoon.

The *Chicago Press & Tribune* reported the incident in a paragraph:

“Pending the first formal ballot, much enthusiasm was aroused by a banner brought in by an old citizen of Macon county, the standards of the same being a couple of stout fence rails, split out by ‘Old Abe’ in 1830 while at work ten miles south of Decatur. It bore an appropriate motto referring to the same. Mr. Lincoln was called out and responded in a pleasant vein, saying he did split the rails or some equally as good.”²⁵

The correspondent of the *Springfield State Journal* was more enthusiastic:

“No feature of the Republican State Convention was more clearly marked than the unanimity which was manifested there for the Hon. Abraham Lincoln. The delegates from every part of the State vied with each other in exhibitions of their unbounded admiration for him.

“Mr. Lincoln’s appearance in the Wigwam as a spectator of the proceedings of the convention was the occasion of a

particularly interesting episode. He had, in pursuance of the courtesy extended him, hardly taken his seat upon the platform, amidst the wildest demonstration of enthusiasm, when Mr. Oglesby of Decatur announced to the delegates that an old Democrat of Macon county, who had grown gray in the service of that party, desired to make a contribution to the convention and the offer being accepted, forthwith two old time fence rails, decorated with flags and streamers, were borne into the convention. . . .

"The effect was electrical. One spontaneous burst of applause went up from all parts of the 'wigwam' which grew more and more deafening as it was prolonged, and which did not wholly subside for ten or fifteen minutes after. The cheers upon cheers which rent the air could have been heard all over the adjacent country.

"Of course 'Old Abe' was called out, and made an explanation of the matter. He stated that some thirty years ago, then just emigrating to the State, he stopped with his mother's family, for one season in what is now Macon County; that he built a cabin, split rails and cultivated a small farm down on the Sangamon river, some six or eight miles from Decatur. These, he was informed were taken from that fence; but whether they were or not, he had mauled many and many better ones since he had grown to manhood.

"The cheers were renewed with the same vigor when he concluded his remarks, and as they subsided, many a delegate, in thoughtful mood, contrasted the present position of the noble, self-taught, self-made statesman and patriot, whose name is now mentioned in connection with the highest office in the gift of the nation, with that of the humble pioneer and rail-maker of thirty years ago."²⁶

Sixty-four years later Ida M. Tarbell wrote of the incident:

"Probably never in the political history of this country has there been anything picked up more quickly as a fitting campaign cry than those rails, unless perhaps the log cabin in the days of Harrison. . . . There began that day at Decatur,

when John Hanks marched into the hall with the rail that Abe made, an outburst of pioneer enthusiasm which has never been equalled in the country. Slogans, campaign signs, cartoons from now on used the rail as a party symbol."²⁷

The rails served their purpose whether they came from the Lincoln cabin site or not. Charles Hanks, who had lived all the time within two and one-half miles of the Lincoln Cabin, wrote in a published letter in 1860 that the entire fence was burned five years after it was built and that he had helped to build a new one. John Hanks maintained the genuineness of the rails.²⁸

LaFayette Whitley, whose father bought the Hanks farm in the neighborhood of the Lincoln Cabin, added to the controversy in 1895 when he sold the land containing the Hanks farm. He said he was a boy on the farm when "Uncle Dick" Oglesby and "Uncle Johnny" Hanks came to his father and told him they wanted some of the rails which had been split by Lincoln. The senior Whitley told them to go to the fence and get all they wanted, "but I don't suppose my father would have let them have them if he had known how the election was going, for he was a staunch Democrat."²⁹

The demonstration over, the convention resumed the balloting to select a candidate for governor. The endorsement of Lincoln by a convention resolution did not come until the next day; it did not occur immediately after the rail episode as many writers have declared. On the fourth ballot Yates was nominated as candidate for governor, and addressing the convention "at some length" declared himself for whatever nominee for President the Chicago convention might select, although he expressed a preference for Lincoln. This started another Lincoln demonstration. Following a speech by Judd, the convention adjourned at six o'clock to meet at ten o'clock the next day.

That night the Wigwam was the scene of a big rally with numerous prominent Republicans responding to calls to speak. Browning, the resolutions chairman, did not return to the hard bed at the Macon House but went to the home

of Oglesby. Browning turned down an invitation to go out in order to work on the convention resolutions for the next day.³⁰

Selecting the remainder of the state candidates was the first order of business the next morning. The weather was delightful and another large crowd assembled both within and without the Wigwam. With the state candidates nominated³¹ Judge Palmer offered the resolution that placed the Republican Party in Illinois back of Lincoln for the presidency and pledged its delegates to him:

"Resolved, that Abraham Lincoln is the first choice of Illinois for the Presidency, and that our delegates be instructed to use all honorable means for his nomination by the Chicago convention, and to cast their votes as a unit for him."

Thomas J. Turner of Freeport, who had served in Congress with Lincoln and was leading the fight for Seward, attacked the resolution. Palmer replied in a strong speech. "A motion was then made," says the official report of the convention, "to strike out 'and to vote as a unit for him', and a further motion was made to strike out 'for him.' A motion to lay these amendments on the table lost. The convention refused to strike 'for him' and adopted the resolution as offered."³²

The *Chicago Press & Tribune* had a different version about what happened. It said there was a motion to amend the resolution by adding the words, "for him." "Some wanted the vote to be a unit throughout," said the paper, "while others contended that in case of the failure to nominate Mr. Lincoln, delegates should be left to follow their own preference. . . . The motion to amend finally prevailed and was unanimously adopted amid 'wildest enthusiasm.'"³³

Both versions agree that "for him" was in the resolution when finally adopted. Further comment on the resolution controversy is provided in an unsigned letter in the *Illinois State Journal* of May 26, 1879. The writer of the letter says:

"The Wilsons of the Chicago Journal and a few others

from the northern part of the state, led by the late Thomas J. Turner of Freeport, opposed any instructions, and not withstanding that nine-tenths of the delegates and all the outsiders were for Old Abe 'now and forever' they, as afterwards in the State Convention of 1864, patiently listened to those who opposed instructing for Old Abe, and sat there holding in their enthusiasm and impatience for the sake of free speech.

"Tom Turner was a tall fine looking man of more than average ability. At last, however, John M. Palmer took him and the Seward men in hand. I think it no flattery to say that there is no man living who can, when the opportunity presents itself, either in law or in a political convention, so grandly rise to the occasion and 'fill the bill' as John M. Palmer. . . .

"Palmer said in substance: 'Does my friend from Freeport imagine that, because this convention like true Republicans, has insisted upon the right of free speech, and granted a little handful of delegates in this convention the right to express their opinions freely and somewhat at too great length — is he so blind and so deaf that he cannot see and hear that this Convention is literally sitting on a volcano of its own enthusiasm for Abraham Lincoln, and just aching to give three cheers and a tiger for Old Abe?' The Convention went wild with enthusiasm."³⁴

Lowber Burrows, one of Decatur's early bankers, who was present at the convention, said that when Lincoln was endorsed by the convention the future President was not in the Wigwam but was asleep in the back room of Jim Peake's jewelry store.³⁵ There was a couch in the rear of the room and Lincoln, who was well acquainted with Peake, according to Mr. Burrows, went in there and said he preferred to lie down and rest rather than mix with the crowd. There, a committee, after a search, found him.

Richard Price Morgan, chairman of the Livingston County delegation to the convention, said in an address at Pontiac, Illinois, on February 12, 1909, that Lincoln was brought

in after the resolution was passed and that he received the news "without a smile but the benignant expression of his eyes and face, and also his whole attitude, disclosed to every man in that multitude the affectionate gratitude of his heart." He added that Lincoln spoke only a few words of thanks.

Later the Livingston County delegation called on Lincoln when the convention had adjourned and asked him what he thought his chances would be in Chicago. Lincoln replied, according to Morgan, that he probably would get about one hundred votes and "I have a notion that will be the high mark for me."³⁶

Selection of delegates to the Chicago convention was the final piece of business. Norman B. Judd, Gustave P. Koerner, David Davis, and Orville H. Browning were named delegates at large with Richard J. Oglesby of Decatur one of the four alternate delegates at large together with W. B. Plate, T. G. S. Herrod, and N. G. Wilcox. A. B. Bunn of Decatur was named as an alternate delegate for district seven, the regular district delegates being:

1. Jason Marsh, Solon Cumins
2. George Schneider, George T. Smith
3. Benton C. Cook, Oliver L. Davis
4. H. Grove, E. W. Hazard
5. William Ross, James S. Irwin
6. Stephen T. Logan, Nathan M. Knapp
7. Thomas A. Marshall, William P. Dole
8. F. S. Rutherford, D. K. Green
9. James C. Sloo, David L. Phillips

The convention recessed until two o'clock when Browning reported for the resolutions committee. At three o'clock the historic state convention adjourned with six cheers for the state ticket and six more for the nominee of the Chicago convention.

CHAPTER 12

The Election

“ . . . If Abe should be nominated for President I will vote for him. . . . ”

— John Hanks

Six days after Abraham Lincoln had been endorsed by the Illinois Republican Convention as “the first choice of Illinois for the presidency,” the National Republican Convention opened in Chicago, with Richard Oglesby of Decatur as a member of that celebrated Illinois delegation headed by Judge David Davis and Norman B. Judd, which would leave no stone unturned to aid in the nomination of Lincoln.

This was the day to which Oglesby had looked forward for four years. He had welcomed Lincoln at the Anti-Nebraska editors’ banquet in Decatur in 1856; he had campaigned with him in 1858; he had engineered two demonstrations in the state convention to stampede the delegates to Lincoln, and now he was with Judge Davis, Judge Logan, Leonard Swett, John M. Palmer, Norman B. Judd, Jesse W. Fell, and a score of others, with headquarters in the Tremont House, working to make Lincoln the choice of the National Convention.

The convention opened on Wednesday, May 16. On Thursday the platform was debated and adopted. On Friday, May 18, Lincoln was nominated. From then until the election in November, Lincoln made no speeches. All the campaigning “was done by others while the Republican candidate remained quietly at Springfield.”¹

Lincoln appeared at the great rally in Springfield on

August 8, 1860, saying "it has been my purpose, since I have been placed in my present position, to make no speeches," and in about 250 words he said he was greatly gratified by the demonstration and that "it is my wish that you will hear the public discussion by others . . . and that you will kindly let me be silent."²

Macon County staged its great rally and ratification on Saturday, July 7, "in a grove near the city"³ with 8,000 present, including many Democrats. The Decatur Wide Awake organization was out in force: 200 Wide Awakes came from Springfield under command of General John Cook, and there were delegations from other towns, all marching to the music of the Decatur Cornet band. The Wide Awake organizations carried a thin rail surmounted by a swinging lamp and small American flags bearing the names of Lincoln and Hamlin.

The Wide Awakes were marching organizations, each member wearing a glazed cap and cape and carrying a colored lantern or blazing coal oil torch. They paraded the streets of almost every town in the North during the summer and fall, always arousing great enthusiasm.

Their origin was purely by accident. Cassius M. Clay spoke in Hartford, Connecticut, in February. A few ardent Republicans accompanied him as an escort or bodyguard, and to protect their clothing from the dripping of the torches a few of them wore improvised capes of black glazed cambric. The uniform attracted so much attention that a campaign club, formed in Hartford soon after, adopted it. The club called itself the Wide Awakes.

Other clubs took up the idea and soon there were Wide Awakes drilling throughout the North. A great many evolutions were invented, a favorite one being a peculiar zigzag march, an imitation of a rail fence. Numbers of clubs adopted the drill of the Zouaves, a popular military organization of the day. Almost all the clubs had their own peculiar badges, Lincoln splitting rails or engineering a flatboat being favorite decorations. There were many medals worn as well. Some of

these badges mixed business and politics. One side implored: "Vote for the Rail Splitter," while the other side advertised such products as wagons or tea.

Most of the clubs owned so-called Lincoln rails which were given the place of honor on all public appearances. The Hartford "originals" had a maul said to have been used by Lincoln in making rails. It was obtained in Illinois and there were credentials to back up the claim. It is now in the possession of the Connecticut Historical Society.

At the Macon County rally of July 7, Dr. George Beaman was marshal of the day, his assistants being W. G. Jones, Edminston McClellan, and W. J. Brown. The day's activities opened, as was the custom with all political rallies in those days, with the raising at ten o'clock of a high pole flying the American flag and the political banners. The speaking did not commence until one o'clock when three of the strongest Republican leaders in the state were presented. Lyman Trumbull led off, followed by Judge David Davis and Leonard Swett, in an afternoon of oratory.

In the evening came the "brilliant torch light parade," a mile in length and "never equalled since the Harrison campaign in 1840." More than 500 Wide Awakes were in the procession. During the evening, Richard J. Oglesby, on behalf of the Decatur Wide Awakes, presented to the Wide Awake club of Springfield a gavel made from a rail "split by Lincoln" in Macon County more than thirty years before.

The following week the Decatur *State Chronicle* printed a long letter from John Hanks, Lincoln's cousin. Despite the close relationship, Hanks had never voted for Lincoln, remaining loyal to the Democratic Party. In the letter he said he was going to vote for his cousin for President. His letter was an answer to a news item in a Columbus, Ohio, paper that declared Hanks was going to vote against Lincoln.

Hanks said he had voted for Douglas in 1858 "against my old friend, Mr. Lincoln." He recalled how he and Lincoln had toiled together on river boats and in the forests; how he had helped to get rails for the Republican state con-

vention. He had declared then that if Abe should be nominated for President he would vote for him.

His letter (see Appendix) was republished in a number of papers in Illinois and in part in many eastern papers, attracting wide attention and undoubtedly pleasing Lincoln. It is suspected that Oglesby had much to do with the writing of the letter but it was signed with John Hanks's name.

On August 16 the Constitution Union Party held its state convention in Decatur (see Appendix). John Bell of Tennessee and Edward Everett of Massachusetts were the party's candidates for President and Vice President. There were eighty-nine delegates present. A state ticket was nominated and district delegates and electors named. Jonathan Stamper of Decatur was nominated for state treasurer on a ticket headed by John Stuart of Sangamon County for governor.

When the voters of Macon County went to the polls in November they gave Douglas forty more votes than they gave Lincoln. The totals were:

Stephen A. Douglas, 1,541

Abraham Lincoln, 1,501

John Bell, 56

John C. Breckenridge, 29

In the home of James Shoaff, staunch Democrat, there was rejoicing by Mrs. Shoaff over the election of Lincoln. Mr. Shoaff wrote to Lincoln:

"Decatur, Ills., Nov. 14, 1860

"Dear 'Abe': — Nancy wishes me to inform *you* that *she* had our cottage beautifully illuminated last night, in *honor of your* election to the Presidency. She is a Strong Lincoln woman, and has fought *manfully* for you during the campaign. Your friends had a grand time here last night.

"Yours respectfully

"JAMES SHOAFF"⁴

CHAPTER 13

To Washington

"An immense multitude awaited the arrival of the train. . . ."

— Henry Villard in the *New York Herald*

Abraham Lincoln, President-elect of the United States, went through Decatur on January 30, 1861, on his way to Charleston, Illinois, to see his stepmother, who lived eight miles from that city, and to visit the grave of his father. Judge David Davis and Judge Edward Bates were traveling with him from Springfield. As the train passed Harristown, Lincoln told his companions that south of there he had helped his father build a house and made enough rails to fence about ten acres. Since that was thirty years ago, he said, he could hardly identify the rails he had made.

John Hanks got on the train in Decatur and went with Lincoln — Hanks having been advised by letter of the visit Lincoln was to make.¹ From Charleston the party went to Farmington and visited Lincoln's stepmother, Mrs. Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln, and the Dennis Hanks family. It was just twelve days before Lincoln was to leave for Washington.

People began arriving at the Decatur Union Station soon after eight o'clock the morning of February 11, 1861. The station had been erected only a little more than four years earlier and was still attractive in its newness. Here the special train bearing President-elect Lincoln and his party would arrive at 9:24 A.M. At eight o'clock the train was leaving Springfield but people were arriving at the Decatur station on horseback, in wagons and carriages, and on foot.

As train time neared, the station platform was filled and the crowd overflowed into any space from which the train could be seen. James Millikin, Jerome R. Gorin, Lowber Burrows, John Ullrich, and scores of other business and professional men who had worked in the political campaigns of the last five years in which Lincoln was the leading Republican of the state, were there to greet Lincoln. In addition there were Democrats and members of other parties, all anxious to get a glimpse of the next President of the United States who was once a resident of Macon County.

It lacked but eleven days of being five years since Lincoln had come to Decatur for the Anti-Nebraska editors' meeting in which the foundation for the Republican Party in Illinois was laid and where Lincoln made his first public appearance in association with the formation of a new party. It was only nine months since he had left Decatur with the title of "Rail Splitter" and the unanimous endorsement of the Republican state convention for President. Decatur felt a particular closeness to Lincoln in his present position.

The train came into view. It consisted of two passenger cars, a baggage car, and a decorated engine in charge of W. C. Whitney, conductor. Also aboard were Clint C. Tilton, president of the Great Western (Wabash) Railroad, and F. W. Bowen, superintendent of the division of the Great Western over which the train was passing. The President-elect and his son, Robert, were the only members of the Lincoln family aboard, for Mrs. Lincoln and the other two sons were traveling by a different route.

With Lincoln were his secretary, John Nicolay, and also John Hay, who had been assisting Nicolay; Dr. William S. Wallace of Springfield, brother-in-law and physician to the President-elect; Ward H. Lamon and Elmer E. Ellsworth, personal bodyguards; and several political associates: Orville H. Browning of Quincy, Governor Richard Yates; John Moore, former lieutenant governor; Ebenezer Peck of Chicago, Norman B. Judd, and two Illinois officials, Jesse K. Dubois and Ozias M. Hatch.

Also included in the party were some young men of Robert Lincoln's age; Robert Irwin, a banker; three army officers; and a number of newspaper correspondents — all making a party of thirty-six,² not including the train crew. The train moved along at between twenty-eight and thirty miles an hour, running under special printed instructions from Superintendent Bowen. After leaving Springfield at eight o'clock the train had the following schedule to Decatur:

Jamestown — 8:15

Dawson — 8:24

Mechanicsburg — 8:30

Lanesville — 8:37

Illiopoliis — 8:49

Niantic — 8:58

Summit — 9:07

Decatur — 9:24

The train came to a stop at the station. As Lincoln came to the rear platform he could see long lines of saddle horses tied about the neighborhood.³ He knew farmers had ridden miles over the prairies to bid him good-by and God-speed. His warm personal friends gathered around to shake his hand after he had made a brief address somewhat in the same vein as that given at Springfield earlier in the morning.

He spoke of the possibility of never seeing his Decatur friends again, so John Quinlan, who was there, said years later.⁴ He spoke of the dangers of his trip to Washington and his life spent in Central Illinois. He thanked those in Decatur for their kindness to him.⁵ After these few remarks he left the car and moved through the crowd shaking hands. Henry Villard, *New York Herald* correspondent, filed this dispatch to his newspaper:

“Arrival at Decatur

“Decatur, Feb. 11 — 9:30 A.M.

“An immense multitude awaited the arrival of the train at the depot, and burst out in enthusiastic cheers as it moved

up. The President left his car and moved rapidly through the crowd, shaking hands to the right and left. After a stoppage of a few minutes the train proceeded."⁶

In the crowd was a little boy, William (Pat) Spangler, who had been forbidden to come because he was so young, but he was a husky, sturdy lad and walked from his home nearly two miles east of the station. He made his way to the railroad tracks, expecting to follow them to the station. He had not gone far when he saw a soldier carrying a gun patrolling the tracks. Pat did not like the looks of the bayonet at the end of the soldier's gun and left the tracks for the fields.

After he had passed the soldier he came back, across ditches filled with water, to the tracks only to encounter another soldier carrying a musket, and still later, a third one. Each time Pat made a detour with the result that when he reached the station he was a bedraggled youngster. When the train came in, Pat crowded up close to the car. As Lincoln left the car Pat was the first to shake his hand. The future president looked at him and said, "My boy, you must have wanted to see me pretty bad."

Years later, Pat Spangler was the sole survivor of those in Decatur who had seen Lincoln pass through on his way to Washington.⁷

After the scheduled five-minute stop, the train left Decatur at 9:29 A.M. Lincoln never came to Decatur again. East from Decatur the train schedule called for arrival at Oakley at 9:45; Cerro Gordo, 9:55; Bement, 10:30; Danville, 12:12, and State Line at 12:30. Thomas Ross, a brakeman on the train, who stood near Lincoln when he spoke from the rear platform, was amazed at the large crowds, not only in the towns and villages but along the track in the country.⁸

Instructions for the operation of the train stipulated:

"This train will be entitled to the road and all other trains must be kept out of the way.

"Trains to be passed and met must be on the side track at least ten minutes before the train is due.

"Agents at all stations between Springfield and State Line must be on duty when this train passes and examine the switches and know that all is right before it passes.

"Operators at telegraph stations between Springfield and State Line must remain on duty until the train passes and immediately report its time to Charles H. Speed, Springfield.

"All foremen and men under their direction must be on the track and know positively that the track is in order.

"It is very important that this train should pass over the road in safety and all employees are expected to render all assistance in their power.

"Red is the signal for danger, but any signal apparently intended to indicate alarm or danger must be regarded, the train stopped, and the meaning of it ascertained.

"Carefulness is particularly enjoined.

"F. W. Bowen, Supt."

Despite all these instructions, a few miles east of Decatur "there was an unscheduled stop while the train crew removed a stake and rider fence that had been erected across the right of way. It won its purpose. The President-elect appeared and waved to the crowd."¹⁰

John Hanks followed Lincoln to Washington and was there for the inauguration. He visited Lincoln at the White House and was in and around Washington for some time. Hanks was anxious for an appointment of some kind but received none. Neither did Dennis Hanks, who also made a visit to Washington to see the President.

The visitor from Decatur that President Lincoln saw was Governor Richard J. Oglesby, close personal and political friend for many years. Oglesby arrived in Washington on the evening of April 14, 1865, shortly before the President and Mrs. Lincoln were to leave for the theater. The President asked Oglesby to go with him but Oglesby asked to be excused as he was tired from his journey. He made an appointment, however, to see the President the next morning.

A few hours later the President was shot and died at 7:22 A.M. the next morning. Oglesby was at his bedside when he died. Later Oglesby was made President of the National Lincoln Memorial Association to erect a monument to Lincoln. The monument in Springfield, Illinois, was dedicated on October 15, 1874, with Oglesby delivering the oration, an honor richly deserved by one of the original Lincoln men¹¹ of Illinois.

APPENDIX

Lincoln Law Cases In Decatur

Compiled from Edwin D. Davis' Macon County Historical Society manuscript, "Lincoln's Law Cases in Macon County, Illinois"; Pratt: *Lincoln Day by Day 1809-1839*; Pratt: *Lincoln Day by Day 1840-1846*; Thomas: *Lincoln Day by Day 1847-1853*; Angle: *Lincoln Day by Day 1854-1861*.

1838

May 14 — Attends opening of two-day term of Macon County Circuit Court, Judge Jesse B. Thomas, Jr., presiding. Wrote the bond of costs in Little Berry Noe *vs.* James Cunningham case in which Noe had a bill for a number of items against Cunningham. Originally, Lincoln's law partner, John T. Stuart, and Charles Emerson represented Noe. Verdict for the defendant.

May 15 — Appointed guardian *ad litem* for the infant heirs of John Lowry, deceased. John Lowry, administrator of the estate of John Lowry, had filed a petition for the sale of real estate.

June 5 — Lincoln answer, as guardian *ad litem* for Lowry heirs, to petition to sell real estate, filed. Says he knows no good reason why petition should not be granted.

Sept. 15 — In case of William and Cornelius Fellows *vs.*

Albert G. Snyder, Willis Oglesby and Abraham Keller, Lincoln filed this statement: "I do hereby enter myself security for costs in cause — A. Lincoln" and also "I do hereby enter myself security to pay or cause to be paid all costs — A. Lincoln." These were suits over notes.

Sept. 19 — Plea in case of *Fellows vs. Snyder, Oglesby and Keller* filed, signed "Stuart and Lincoln" for the October term of court.

(No fall term of court.)

1839

Mar. 24 — Agreement filed by Stuart and Lincoln for W. and C. Fellows and by Abraham Keller for the defendant: "It is hereby agreed that the suit now pending in the Macon County Court, W. and C. Fellows *vs.* A. G. Snyder and Co. . . . and the same in Keller and Snyder be dismissed at the costs of the Defendant."

June 3 — Stuart and Lincoln present for opening of three-day term of court, Judge Samuel H. Treat presiding.

Lincoln is said to have written the agreement on file in the case of John Sawyers *vs.* David Condell, an appeal case from the justice court of Charles Emerson.

Lincoln appointed guardian *ad litem* of Amanda Gray. In case of Henry M. Goran, school commissioner *vs.* Elizabeth Gray, wife of Lewis A. Gray, deceased, Lincoln "knew of no reason why judgement should not be rendered in this cause."

Appointed guardian of the infant heirs of Henry Butler in petition to sell real estate. Lincoln made no objection to petition which was granted by the court.

Case of *Fellows vs. Snyder and others* (Mar. 24, 1839) dismissed "as per agreement on file."

June 4 — In *David Adkins vs. Robert Hines*, suit for slander, Douglas and Benedict appeared for Adkins, and Stuart and Lincoln and Charles Emerson for Hines. Plea written by Lincoln is signed by Emerson for the defendant who is found not guilty.

Plea written by Lincoln and signed by Emerson for defendant in case of David Adkins *vs.* Levi Meisenhelter, a suit for slander, filed. Case had been continued on previous day at cost of the plaintiff.

Oct. 28 — Four-day term of court convenes. (Judge's docket is missing making it impossible to determine Lincoln's cases except those in which his name is mentioned.)

Adkins *vs.* Meisenhelter slander suit (June 4, 1839, dismissed at cost of plaintiff.

Oct. 29 — Adkins *vs.* Meisenhelter slander suit appealed.

Oct. 31 — Appointed guardian *ad litem* of the infant heirs of Russell Shepherd, in Shepherd and Manly, Admrs., *vs.* Heirs of Russell Shepherd.

Appointed guardian *ad litem* for the infant heirs of John Warnick in the case of William Warnick, Adm. *vs.* Heirs of John Warnick.

Appointed by Judge Thomas to defend David Adkins, indicted for larceny. Jury finds defendant not guilty.

1840

May 26 — William Young, assignee of Thomas Devine, *vs.* Ephrim Cox, a case to collect on a note. Emerson was counsel for Young and Lincoln for Cox. Plaintiff awarded \$154.99 and costs and charges.

May 27 — Henry Prather and John L. Anderson, transacting business under the name, style and firm of H. Prather and Co. *vs.* Samuel E. Nesbitt and James L. Nesbitt, transacting business under the name, style and firm of S. E. and J. L. Nesbitt. Suit to recover \$87.23 of Samuel Nesbitt with costs and charges.

Oct. — Benjamin Dillehunt *vs.* Kirby Benedict. Appealed from justice court in which Dillehunt recovered a judgment for working amounting to \$33.53. Lower court sustained and case appealed to Supreme Court on question of law with L. Trumbull and J. Lamborn for Benedict; Emerson and Lincoln for Dillehunt. (Supreme Court sustained lower court.)

1850

June 1 — Jacob Spangler, executor of William Hanks, Jr., *vs.* Samuel Wood and Henry, for debt. Post and Lincoln for Spangler; Emerson for Wood. Jury is waived and the court awards \$64.29 on a note to plaintiff (Lincoln's fee was \$5 according to estate papers of William Hanks, Jr.).

Emerson and Lincoln for Jacob Rhodes in suit against Guy Helm. This was a dispute over work of building a house. There had been an agreement to arbitrate in July, 1849, the arbitrators awarding the defendant \$177.04, to be secured by a note. Rhodes appealed to the circuit court. Defendant was given leave to file additional pleas by Sept. 1.

James M. Barnes *vs.* Abraham Marquess, suit in chancery to set aside a mill for relief. Docket says Gridley appeared for Barnes and Emerson for defendant but later statement by Judge David Davis shows Lincoln was in the suit, probably with Emerson. Case continued.

Lincoln's name was included with that of Post representing William Warnick in an ejection suit against John Eckel which had been filed Nov. 16, 1849, with Emerson representing Eckel. It was a suit in which Warnick sought to recover a farm.

Nov. 14 — Rhodes *vs.* Helm, *assumpsit* suit (June 1, 1850) comes to trial; Emerson and Lincoln for Rhodes; Post for Helm. Jury disagreed and was discharged.

William Warnick *vs.* John Eckel, ejection suit (June 1, 1850), Post and Lincoln for Warnick; Emerson for Eckel. Case continued.

Nov. 15 — Lincoln writes and files a bond for costs for the plaintiff in Hill *vs.* Shelton G. Whitley. In this slander suit Emerson represented Hill; Post represented Whitley.

Nov. 16 — In Anderson Froman *vs.* John Pearson, a case of attachment on nine head of cattle, Post and Emerson filed proof of publication for the plaintiff while Benedict and Lincoln were to answer for the defendant by April 1.

Thornton and Lincoln file the defendant's answer in William C. Redfield and Maria Redfield *vs.* Joseph C. De-

wees, a case involving a dower right. Emerson appeared for the Redfields. Case continued.

Hill *vs.* Shelton Whitley again continued. (Nov. 15, 1850)

1851

May 28 — Rhodes *vs.* Helm (Nov. 14, 1850) an assumpsit suit with Emerson and Lincoln for Rhodes, is dismissed by agreement, each party paying his own costs. Post represented Helm.

In Hill *vs.* Whitley trespass suit (Nov. 15, 1850), Emerson and Lincoln for the plaintiff secure leave from Judge Harlan to open depositions.

May 30 — Hill *vs.* Whitley trespass suit (Nov. 15, 1850 and May 29, 1851) comes to trial with Emerson and Lincoln for Hill; Post for Whitley. Jury finds for Lincoln's client awarding him five cents damages and costs, \$41.78.

Lincoln and Benedict file the defendant's answer in the Froman *vs.* Pearson case (Nov. 16, 1850) and case is continued at cost of the defendant.

Warnick *vs.* Eckel suit (June 1, and Nov. 14, 1850) with Post and Lincoln for Warnick, again continued.

May 31 — In Fielding House *vs.* John G. H. Smith, John C. Garver and Garland Wheeler, with Post and Lincoln representing the defendants and Emerson representing the plaintiff who sought to replevin tools, bed, black cow and a calf. Emerson and Lincoln submitted the case to the Court without a jury, the Court ordering that the defendants restore the property and pay the costs and charges.

In Redfield and Redfield *vs.* Joseph C. Dewees (Nov. 16, 1850) in which Lincoln and Thorton represented Dewees, the court decided against Dewees declaring Maria Redfield should recover her dower rights. A commission was appointed to assign dowry and report at the November term of court, at which time the commissioners' report was approved.

Lincoln represented Marietta King, Joseph King and

others in chancery suit against John Lee and others represented by Emerson. Case filed and continued.

Nov. 13 — Case of Froman *vs.* Pearson (Nov. 16, 1850) first docketed in November, 1849, with Lincoln and Benedict representing Pearson, is dismissed by agreement, each to pay one half of all costs.

Lincoln represents Shelton G. Whitley in a suit brought by Benjamin B. Austin, represented by Emerson and Wait. Lincoln wrote and filed five pleas and an affidavit for his client which were signed by Post and Lincoln. After having agreed to submit the dispute to a referee, G. W. Powers, Whitley refused to accept the award and Austin sued for \$500 damages.

Nov. 14 — Emerson and Wait, attorneys for Benjamin B. Austin in suit against Shelton G. Whitley, filed the previous day, dismiss the suit. Lincoln represented Whitley.

Lincoln is said to have written the bill for divorce on file in the case of Sarah Ogden *vs.* Jonathan Ogden. In place of alimony, Sarah Ogden received a bed, bed-stead, and \$400 and costs; \$100 to be paid in open court and \$300 on Dec. 25, 1852.

Nov. 15 — "On motion of A. Lincoln, an attorney and counsellor at law of this court, it is ordered by the court that Robert M. Evans of Indiana, an attorney and counsellor at law of the courts of the State of Indiana, be admitted to practise as such in this court."

In Warnick *vs.* Eckel ejectment case (June 1, 1850) John Eckel, Elizabeth Eckel, Fredrick N. Neintkee, Rebecca Neintkee and Elinor Neintkee, represented by Emerson and Lincoln. An injunction was granted, Warnick being enjoined from further proceedings in the ejectment suit. (See Nov. 13, 1852.)

Case of King et al *vs.* Lee et al (May 31, 1851) tried with Lincoln representing complainants. Taken under advisement. Lincoln copies a bond for the execution of a warranty deed and has the clerk certify it.

1852

June 3 — Warnick *vs.* Eckel, ejectment (June 1, 1850), Post and Lincoln for plaintiff. Case continued.

Eckel *vs.* Warnick, injunction against ejectment (Nov. 15, 1851), Post and Lincoln for defendant. Plaintiff files replication. Case continued.

June 4 — In John Edwards use of Andrew Edwards *vs.* Israel Florey, an appeal case from the justice court, Emerson and Wait represented the plaintiff and Lincoln the defendant. Judgment of the justice court awarding plaintiff \$77.65 and costs affirmed.

Case of Jesse Hoffman use of E. M. Thorpe *vs.* Andrew Edwards use of John Edwards in which Post and Lincoln represented Hoffmann, and Emerson and Wait the defendant, an appeal case from the justice court, was dismissed by the plaintiff after the cause to be tried had been submitted to the court.

Thomas O. Smith, administrator of Rachel Owen *vs.* William Prather, in a suit over a note with Lincoln representing Prather and Wait and Emerson the complainant, case was continued.

Trustees of School of Township 16 *vs.* Henry Prather, ejectment, Lincoln files declaration.

John G. Taylor *vs.* John B. Moffett, ejectment, Lincoln representing Moffett. Plaintiff files declaration and defendant is to appear and plead within 20 days.

June 5 — Benjamin F. Taylor *vs.* Samuel Rea, sheriff, with Lincoln representing Rea, and Emerson representing Taylor, suit to obtain payment of money. Case continued.

E. O. Smith *vs.* Ansen Packard in an appeal suit to recover damages for a cow. Lincoln represented Smith and Emerson represented Packard. In the justice court in January Smith had been awarded \$9, "the value of one white cow with red ears, two years old last fall, unjustly taken and detained by the defendant," and costs amounting to \$14.95.

In the circuit court, a jury awarded Lincoln's client \$10 and costs.

King et al *vs.* Lee et al (May 31, 1851), suit in chancery. Jury found for the complainant represented by Lincoln.

Nov. 12 — Beecham Turpin *vs.* Alexander J. Wilson. Emerson represented Turpin and Lincoln represented the defendant. Wilson had appealed a justice court decision awarding Turpin \$5 and costs "for injuries done to one large sow and pigs by dogs." A jury was waived and Judge David Davis sustained the justice court award.

Daniel Peck *vs.* Anderson Froman, trespass on the case. Lincoln and Thorp representing Peck took a non suit with leave to reinstate. Emerson and Wait for Froman.

Nov. 13 — Thomas J. Moffett, Rebecca Moffett, William Moffett, Elizabeth Moffett, Eliza Ann Moffett, Francis J. Moffett, Edy Moffett, James H. Moffett, Caroline Moffett and Mary J. Moffett *vs.* John B. Moffett, ejection. Lincoln files defendant's plea.

Peck *vs.* Froman, in which a non suit with leave to reinstate was entered the previous day, Lincoln joins issue on defendant's plea.

John Hanks *vs.* Joshua B. Hanks, trespass on case, with Lincoln representing John Hanks. Plaintiff dismissed case.

Lucinda Brown, assignee of Anderson Froman, *vs.* Daniel Peck and Enoch Peck, Lincoln representing defendant, and Post, the plaintiff. Case continued.

Benjamin F. Taylor *vs.* Samuel Rea, sheriff (June 5, 1852) Lincoln representing Rea and Emerson for Taylor. Motion against sheriff to pay to Taylor the sum of \$167.27, due in execution against the real estate of John B. Moffett. Rea to pay the money.

John G. Taylor *vs.* John B. Moffett, Lincoln for defendant with Emerson and Wait for plaintiff. Case continued. (In a Taylor *vs.* Moffett ejection case filed June 4, 1852, the defendant did not appear on Nov. 12, 1852 and award was made to plaintiff of \$349.37 and costs.)

1853

May 23 — John Hanks *vs.* Joshua B. Hanks, trespass on case on promises. Post and Lincoln for plaintiff are given leave to amend their declaration.

May 24 — Trustees of School *vs.* Henry Prather; Lincoln and Moor for plaintiff; Emerson and Wait for defendant. Case continued by agreement.

May 26 — In Thomas O. Smith *vs.* William Prather, debt case, a line is drawn through Lincoln's name in the docket as an attorney for defendant. Oglesby and Thorton represented defendant.

In Daniel Peck *vs.* Anderson Froman, a declaration was filed signed "Lincoln" and Thorp. Froman, a tenant of Peck, was charged with cutting down trees and carrying away rails. Agreement in case was signed by J. S. Post for defendant and E. Thorp for plaintiff.

In Lucinda Brown, assignee of Anderson Froman *vs.* Daniel Peck and Enoch Peck, assumpsit, a line is drawn through Thorton and Lincoln in the docket and Thorp substituted as attorney for the defendant.

May 27 — John G. Taylor *vs.* John B. Moffett, ejection. Lincoln for the defendant; Emerson and Wait for the plaintiff. Case is submitted to court without a jury. Find for the defendant. Plaintiff asks a new trial.

Thomas J. Moffett and others *vs.* John B. Moffett. Lincoln for the defendant; Emerson and Wait for plaintiff. Case continued.

Oct 24 — Thomas J. Moffett and others *vs.* John B. Moffett (Nov. 13, 1852, May 27, 1853). Post and Lincoln for defendant. Case dismissed by agreement, the defendant to pay all costs.

Oct. 25 — John Hanks *vs.* Joshua B. Hanks (May 23, 1853), Post and Lincoln for the plaintiff. Because Emerson was one of Joshua B. Hanks' lawyers and was now presiding as judge, a change of venue was granted to Sangamon county.

Taylor *vs.* Moffett, ejection (May 27, 1853). Lincoln for defendant. Continued by agreement to be tried by some attorney to be agreed upon by parties at next term of court.

Trustees of School *vs.* Prather (May 24, 1853) Lincoln and Moor for plaintiff. Agreement made for case to be tried by attorney of the court.

1854

Oct. 26 — Taylor *vs.* Moffett, ejection (May 27, 1853) continued by consent. (In October 1853, there was agreement that this case be tried by some attorney to be agreed upon at next term of court.)

(There are no other cases on record with Lincoln's name for this year.)

1855

June 2 — Richard J. Gatling, William Martin and Henry Prather *vs.* The Great Western R.R. (Wabash), ejection; Lincoln and Prather for plaintiffs; Wait and Oglesby for the railroad. Plaintiff files his declaration and notice. Case continued.

Oct. 31 — In Gatling and others *vs.* Great Western R.R. (above) parties agree that the suit shall be submitted to the judge in vacation, the judgment to be entered at this term of court. Cause continued.

1856

June 2 — Taylor *vs.* Moffett, ejection (May 27, 1853, Oct. 25, 1853, Oct. 26, 1854), Lincoln for defendant. Change of venue to Sangamon county.

June 4 — Jacob Overholt and David Squier *vs.* County of Christian, change of venue from Christian county to Macon county. Concerns building courthouse in Christian

County, the county charging foundations were not deep enough. Thornton and Lincoln for defendant.

June 5 — Thornton and Lincoln file plea for defendant in above case from Christian county. Case heard and verdict for plaintiff. Assess the charges at \$657.87.

June 6 — Gatling and others *vs.* Great Western R.R. (June 2 and Oct. 31, 1855). Case continued.

June 7 — Appeal of Christian county case (June 5, 1856) by defendant to Supreme court. (In supreme court judgment of lower court was reversed.)

1857

July 3 — Gatling and others *vs.* Great Western R.R. (June 6, 1856) case submitted to court without jury. Taken under advisement. [On April 5, 1858 and July 22, 1858, and on March 8, 1859, this case was continued and on Aug. 10, 1859 the plaintiff, by Attorney J. L. Post, dismissed the suit. Lincoln and Prather had started as attorneys for the plaintiff.]

1858

Apr. 10 — Lincoln and Herndon are given as counsel for Wesley W. Ayers in suit of attachment against Lyman Dudley, but on the printed form of Gallagher, Wait and Oglesby, the name of Herndon is written in and papers are signed Herndon, Gallagher, Wait and Oglesby.

July 19 — In above case the defendant did not appear and judgment of \$1,294.80 and costs were granted.

In Wesley W. Ayer *vs.* John N. Willard, attachment, defendant did not appear and judgment of \$1,294.80 granted. Printed form has "Lincoln and Herndon" written in as attorneys for plaintiff.

1859

Spring term of circuit court opened, Mar. 7, began business on Tuesday, Mar. 8. *Illinois State Chronicle* of Decatur in Mar. 10 issue said: "Personal — Hon. A. Lincoln, of Springfield, was in the city on Monday last."

In Justice Courts.

Lincoln appeared in Justice of Peace courts of Decatur many times over a long period of years according to statements of old settlers. There are no records of justice court cases.

Anti-Nebraska Platform
Adopted at editors' convention in Decatur
February 22, 1856

We, a portion of the editors of the anti-Nebraska press of the State of Illinois, in convention assembled at the city of Decatur, on the 22d day of February, 1856, in view of the universal commotion that pervades our whole country upon the subject of slavery, and the rights and obligations and responsibilities of the General and State Governments and territories, with reference thereto, and in view of the necessity which exists for the establishment of a basis of common and concerted action among ourselves, hold it to be our privilege, and a present duty, to define our position in the preamble and resolutions as that basis:

We recognize fully the legal rights of the Slave States to hold and enjoy their property in slaves under their State laws, and within the jurisdiction of those laws, and we further recognize their constitutional right to a return of such "persons owing service under the laws of a State" as may escape beyond the jurisdiction of those laws under which said service is held due.

We recognize our constitutional obligation to discharge all our duty imposed by that clause of the constitution which provides for the suppression of domestic violence, in any of the States, when lawfully called on to that end.

We disclaim any thought or purpose to annoy or disturb our sister States in the peaceful enjoyment of any of their

rights, and in this declaration we mean what we say, with full regard to its letter and spirit.

We hold that freedom of speech and the freedom of the press, (under just responsibilities for the abuse of either,) are indispensable attributes of freedom.

We hold (in accordance with the expressed opinion of Mr. Jefferson), that territories acquired since the adoption of the constitution, have not a constitutional right to demand admittance into the sisterhood of States.

We hold that the right and duty of Congress to consider the application for the admittance of any proposed State, to judge of the effect of such admittance on the present and prospective prosperity, rights and safety of the States of the Union collectively and severally, and to decide as their wisdom may determine, is a sacred and invaluable right — our only practical constitutional means of self-protection against the general corruption of the whole body politic by the inoculation of any poisonous matter into our extremities, by the uncontrolled will of outsiders; a right never to be surrendered, but to be maintained at all hazards.

We hold that our general government is imbued throughout the whole organization with the spirit of Liberty, as set forth originally in the Declaration of Independence, and endorsed annually on the Fourth of July by the throngs of assembled freemen in all parts of our country; — that it recognizes FREEDOM as the rule, and SLAVERY as the exception, made and provided for as such: — and that it nowhere sanctions the idea of property in a man as one of its principles, nor as being in harmony with its principles.

Entertaining the foregoing views, and intending in good faith to abide by them, cheerfully according to the slave States all the rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution, and disclaiming any intention of interference, either directly or indirectly, with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists, but being determined firmly to maintain the rights of the non-slaveholding States, and to resist by the Constitutional means at our command, all aggression by the

principle and power of slavery upon these, be it

Resolved, That the conditions which are demanded under plea of "rights" as being essential to the security of Slavery throughout its expanded and expanding area, are inconsistent with freedom, an invasion of our rights, oppressive and unjust, and must be resisted.

Resolved, That we are in favor of the restoration of the Missouri Compromise, or in other words, that we will strive by all legal means to restore to Kansas and Nebraska, a legal guarantee against Slavery, of which they were deprived at cost of the violation of the plighted faith of the Nation.

Resolved, That we hold the settlement of the true relations of the General and State Governments to Slavery, and the restriction of Slavery to its present authorized limits, as the paramount questions for consideration.

Resolved, That we deem it the duty of all who concur in these views to unite for the purpose of giving them practical effect, without regard to difference of opinion upon any other issue: that in regard to office we hold merit, not birth place to be the test, deeming the rule of Thos. Jefferson — is he honest? is he capable? — the only true rule; that we shall maintain the Naturalization laws as they are, believing as we do, that we should welcome the exiles and emigrants from the Old World, to homes of enterprise and of freedom in the New.

That while we are in favor of the widest tolerance upon all matters of religious faith, we will repel all attacks upon our Common School System, or upon any of our Institutions of an educational character, or our civil polity by the adherents of any religious body whatever.

Resolved, That second only to the Slavery extension question, as now presented to the people of Illinois, the demand

for reform in the administration of the State government is the most urgent and imperative; that we look with alarm upon the disorder of the State finances and the frequently illegal and unwarranted expenditures of the people's money by the Nebraska party now in power; that the good name and future credit of the State, demand that this reform be early commenced, and rigidly pursued, until Illinois is once more restored to the rank and reputation of a debt paying State.

The Fence Rails
From *How Abraham Lincoln Became President*, by
J. McCan Davis
(The Illinois Company, Springfield, Ill. 1909)

Governor Richard J. Oglesby said to Mr. Davis:

"I had known John Hanks all my life. He was a Democrat, but a great friend of Lincoln. Years before they had gone together on a flatboating expedition down the Mississippi. He had wanted to vote for Lincoln for United States senator, but he could not do this without voting for the local Republican candidates for the Legislature. As soon as he heard that Lincoln might be nominated for President, he was bound to vote for 'Old Abe.'

"One day I was talking with John about Abe and he said that in 1830 they made a clearing 12 miles west of Decatur. There was a patch of timber — fifteen or twenty acres — and they cleared it; they had built a cabin, cut the trees, mauled rails, and put up a fence.

" 'John,' said I, 'did you split rails down there with old Abe?'

" 'Yes; every day,' he replied.

" 'Do you suppose you could find any of them now?'

" 'Yes,' he said. 'The last time I was down there, ten years ago, there were plenty of them left.'

" 'What are you going to do tomorrow?'

" 'Nothing.'

" 'Then,' said I, 'come around and get in my buggy, and we will drive down there.'

"So the next day we drove out to the old clearing. We turned in by the timber, and John said:

" 'Dick, if I don't find any black walnut rails, nor any honey-locust rails, I won't claim it's the fence Abe and I built.'

"Presently John said, 'There's the fence!'

"But look at these great trees,' I said.

" 'Certainly,' he answered. 'They have all grown up since.'

"John got out. I stayed in the buggy. John kneeled down and commenced chipping the rails of the old fence with his knife. Soon he came back with black walnut shavings and honey-locust shavings.

" 'There they are!' said he, triumphantly, holding out the shavings. 'They are the identical rails we made.'

"Then I got out and made an examination of the fence. There were many black walnut and honey-locust rails.

" 'John,' said I, 'where did you cut these rails?'

" 'I can take you to the stumps,' he answered.

" 'We will go down there,' said I.

"We drove about one hundred yards.

" 'Now,' said he, 'look! There's a black walnut stump; there's another, another, another. Here's where we cut the trees down and split the rails. Then we got a horse and wagon, and hauled them in, and built the fence, and also the cabin.'

"We took two of the rails and tied them under the hind axle-tree of my new buggy, and started for town. People would occasionally pass, and think something had broken. We let them think so, for we didn't wish to tell anybody just what we were doing. We kept right on until we got to my barn. There we hid the rails until the day of the convention.

"Before the convention met I talked with several Republicans about my plan, and we fixed it up that old John Hanks should take the rails into the convention. We made a banner, attached to a board across the top of the rails, with the inscription:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Rail Candidate for President in 1860.

Two rails from a lot of 3,000 made in 1830 by John Hanks and Abe Lincoln, whose father was the first pioneer of Macon county.

"After the convention got under way, I arose and announced that an old Democrat desired to make a contribution to the convention. The proceedings stopped, and all was expectancy and excitement. Then in walked Old John with the rails. Lincoln was there in a corner, trying to escape observation.

" 'How are you, Abe?' said John, familiarly, as he passed.

" 'How are you, John?' Lincoln answered with equal familiarity.

"Then the convention cheered and cheered. There were loud and persistent calls for a speech from Lincoln. Abe had not known that the rails were to be brought in. He hardly knew what to say about them.

" 'Gentlemen,' he finally said, 'John and I did make some rails down there; and if those aren't the identical rails we made, they certainly look very much like them.' "

John Hanks's Letter
In *Illinois State Journal*, Springfield, Illinois,
July 16, 1860, republished from the
Illinois State Chronicle, Decatur, Illinois.

Editor of the Chronicle — Dear Sir: The following article appeared in the Columbus Statesman a few days ago, which I take from the Coles County Ledger:

“Hanks Against Lincoln — We were informed a day or two ago by a delegate to the Baltimore convention, who called at our office, that John Hanks, the man who assisted Abe Lincoln to make those rails about which the Republicans are making such a terrible hubbub, has announced himself opposed to the election of Lincoln. Hanks, who has never been a Democrat, is against the Republican nominee because he knows Lincoln to be a humbug and nothing else. Hurrah for Hanks!”

To this article I desire briefly to reply. If my choice for President, or how I shall vote as between two candidates for that office, is worth considering at all, I claim it as a simple right to be correctly represented. I am but a farmer and regret to say not an educated one. — I never have been a candidate for any office, nor do I expect ever to be. Whilst I can with all truthfulness say this, yet I have never been a negative man in politics. From my boyhood I have been a constant voter with the Democratic party in all essential elections; I have thought that party to be upright and straight forward in all the principles it has really adopted. So late as 1858, I voted for Mr. Douglas against my old friend,

Mr. Lincoln. For forty years I have looked upon the party with pride and hailed its success with pleasure; but as Mr. Douglas made a speech in Decatur in 1855, and in my hearing, spoke so pleasantly and so honorably of the old Whig party and of Mr. Clay, its leader, after having for 15 years, in discussing general politics, when I used to love to listen to him so well, spoken so complainingly and so abusively of that party and of Mr. Clay, charging upon it and him many very bad and mean things, until listening to him I learned to look upon both as dangerous and full of evil. The thought struck me that for the future I never would judge of a party or its leaders by what an opponent might say, and this conclusion I mean to follow the balance of my life. How foolish it is to abuse a party because my friend may do so, and then praise the same party because that friend may change and do so; he may be designing — I would, in all probability be a dupe. Ever since Mr. Douglas made that speech in 1855 he has been abusing the Republicans just like he used to abuse the old Whigs. I am tired of this kind of warfare. I think it is not right to do so, and as Mr. Douglas further said in that speech that he was in the habit of sometimes changing his politics, I did not know but that it was about time for him to begin to excuse and cease to abuse the Republicans, and made up my mind to let him go in time. Now as to entirely changing my politics, I cannot say I have done this, but for the life of me I can see nothing in the Republican party that any honest Democrat can seriously oppose. It is true, were they such a party as Mr. Douglas used to say they were, I could see objectionable features about it; but then is it wise to believe everything Mr. Douglas has said, when he tells us he sometimes changes, and when we have near us honest men, known to be purely honest for more than thirty years, who deny all this and propose to tell us the true state of the case and to give us the true principles of that party? I think not. Besides this when we have for years been opposed, in politics, to a man who has again and again seen his party defeated, and has himself

sometimes failed and still seen that man true to his colors, re-arming and re-entering the field to try to uphold and successfully plant his colors upon the side of victory; when all the time he knew he had but to change once to win and yet has never changed, I think I may say never faltered, how are we to respect him. Such a man I have known Mr. Lincoln for thirty years to be.

In boyhood days we toiled together; many are the days we have lugged the heavy oar on the Ohio, the Illinois and the Mississippi Rivers together; many are the long cold days we have journeyed over the wild prairies and through the forest with gun and axe; and though it is now pleasant to refer to it, well do I remember when we set out together in the cold winter to cut and maul rails on the Sangamon river, in Macon county 30 years ago to enclose his father's little home, and from day to day kept at work until the whole was finished and the homestead fenced in. We often swapped work in this way and yet, during the many years we were associated together as laborers, sometimes flat-boating, sometimes hog-driving, sometimes rail-making and, too, when it was nearly impossible to get books he was a constant reader; I was a listener. He settled the disputes of all the young men in the neighborhood and his decisions were always abided by. I never knew a man so honest under all circumstances for his whole life. Thus associated with Mr. Lincoln, I learned to love him and when, in 1858, he was a candidate for the first time within my reach, against my feelings and, I may say, against my convictions, my old party ties induced me to vote for Mr. Douglas. My Democratic friends all declared Lincoln was an Abolitionist. I heard him make a speech in Decatur just before the election and I could see nothing bad in it; but I was told by the party he was wrong and yet I did not see how he could be, but they said so, and I was a Democrat and went in. My wife used to say to me that some day Abe would come out and be something; I thought so too, but I could not exactly see how a man in the lower walks of life, a day laborer, and hopelessly poor,

would ever stand much chance to get up very high in the world.

At last, one day at home, we heard that the Republican State Convention was to be held at Decatur, and that they were going for Abe for President. As soon as I found this out I went into town and told a friend of Abe's that as great and honest merit was at last to be rewarded in the person of my old friend, Mr. Lincoln, by the Republican party, I thought of the hard and trying struggles of his early days and recollecting the rails we had made together thirty years ago, made up my mind to present some of them to that convention as a testimonial of the beginning of one of the greatest living men of the age, believing they would speak more in his praise than any orator could, and honor true labor more than the praise of men or the resolutions of conventions. On our way to get the rails I told the friend of old Abe that if Abe should be nominated for President I would vote for him; everybody knows he has been, and I rejoice that I live to give this testimony to his goodness and honesty, and hope I shall live to vote for him for President of the United States next November. Is there anything wrong in this? Who ought to refuse to vote for as good and as great a man as he is? I know that in voting for him I vote with the Republican Party and will be considered as adopting its principles. As I now understand him I see no reason why I may not do so; our own party is divided and we have no Solomon to tell who shall take the child. Slavery has divided the Democratic Party, and nobody can blame Republicanism for the destruction that came upon us at Charleston. Slavery has disunited us — it has united the Republican Party, and if there is any good about the question they have it all and we have the trouble. If I understand Mr. Douglas now, he occupies a position on this question just as distateful to the South as Mr. Lincoln does — with this clear difference; The South seems to understand Mr. Lincoln's position better than his and to respect it a great deal more; and I am convinced that if Mr. Douglas does not respect the nigger he does the mu-

latto, and one brings just as much in Mobile as the other and stands as high in the market.

Many of my Democratic neighbors will say I have done wrong; but I know there are many who would do as I have done were it not that they do not feel willing to break away from party ties and encounter "the talk" of old friends. As long as I have old Abe to lead me I know that I shall never go very far from the right. Should he be elected President and find any trouble in steering his new boat he has only to remember how we used to get out of hard places by rowing straight ahead, and never by making short turns. The tallest oaks in the forest have fallen by his giant arms; he still wields a tremendous maul; out of the largest timber he can make the smallest rails. I have seen him try a tough cut and fail once; in the second trial he never failed to use it up. Though not a very beautiful symbol of honesty I think the rail a fitting one, and mean to present Abe with one of his own make should he be elected, in the city of Washington on the day of his inauguration, to be kept in the White House during his administration.

John Hanks

Constitutional Union Party
State convention in Decatur, Illinois,
August 16, 1860

The Illinois state convention of the Constitutional Union party was held in Decatur August 16, 1860. John Bell of Tennessee was the party's candidate for President, and Edward Everett of Massachusetts, the candidate for Vice President.

There were eighty-nine delegates representing thirty-six counties at the Decatur convention. Buckner S. Morris of Chicago called the convention to order at 9:00 A.M. J. W. Chickering of Cook county was named temporary chairman. Dr. Ward of Cook county introduced a resolution that all delegates pledge to do all possible to elect the party candidates and all who "will not accept this pledge shall not be entitled to hold a seat and vote in the convention."

The morning session closed with the permanent organization naming John Rogers of Cook County president of the convention.

At two o'clock Buckner Morris of Chicago made a lengthy speech saying that he would not vote for a Republican for dog pelter; that he would vote for any Democrat to defeat Lincoln; that, if necessary, he would vote for Stephen A. Douglas. There was loud applause. Morris then said that Lincoln was an honest, upright, high-minded man but that he was led by Abolitionists.

The state ticket nominated the following:

Governor — John T. Stuart, Sangamon County

Lieutenant Governor — Henry Clay, Blackburn, Rock Island

Secretary of State — James Monroe, Coles

Auditor — James D. Smith, Sangamon

Treasurer — Jonathan Stamper, Macon

Superintendent of Public Instruction — D. J. Snow, Sangamon

Presidential electors were named as follows:

Electors at large — M. Y. Johnson, Jo Davies County;
D. M. Woodson, Green County.

District electors:

1. H. S. Hanchett, McHenry
2. John R. Rogers, Cook
3. Josiah Snow, McLean
4. Alexander I. Frick, Mercer
5. C. W. Irwin, Brown
6. D. A. Brown, Sangamon
7. John Cofer, Douglas
8. L. Noland, Marion
9. W. J. Yost, Alexander

Lincoln's Plea of Justification
in case of David Adkins *vs.* Robert Hines

Robert Hines
ats
David Adkins

And the said defendant comes and defends the wrong and injury when, where &. as to the speaking and publishing of the said several words of and concerning the said plaintiff, as in his said declaration mentioned the said defendant by leave of the court here for the purpose first had and obtained according to the form of the statute in such case made and provided, saith that the said plaintiff ought not to have or maintain his aforesaid action thereof against him, because he says that the said plaintiff, before the speaking and publishing of the said several words of and concerning the said plaintiff as in his said declaration mentioned, towit, on the fifteenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirtyeight, at the county of Macon in the state of Illinois, did feloniously steal, take and carry away certain goods and chattels, towit, five pigs and five hogs of one George G. Deeds of great value, towit of the value of fifty dollars — Wherefore he the said defendant afterward, towit at the same several times when &. in the said declaration mentioned at the county of Macon aforesaid, did speak and publish the said words of and concerning the said plaintiff as in the said declaration mentioned as he lawfully might for the cause aforesaid — And this he the said defendant is ready to verefy [*sic*], wherefore he prays judgement if the said plaintiff ought to have or maintains his aforesaid action thereof against him &.

And for further plea in this behalf as to the speaking and publishing of the said several words of and concerning the said plaintiff, as in his declaration mentioned, the said defendant, by leave of the court here for this purpose first had and obtained according to the form of the statute in such case made and provided, saith that the said plaintiff ought not to have or maintain his aforesaid action thereof against him because he says that the said plaintiff, before the speaking and publishing of the said words of and concerning the said plaintiff as in his said declaration mentioned, towit on the fifteenth day of March in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirtyeight at the county of Macon in the state of Illinois, did feloniously steal, take and carry away certain chattels, towit five pigs and five hogs of one David Stutesman of great value towit of the value of fifty dollars — Wherefore he the said defendant afterward, towit, at the said several times when &. in the said declaration mentioned at the county of Macon aforesaid, did speak and publish the same words of and concerning the said plaintiff, as in the said declaration mentioned as he lawfully might for the cause aforesaid . . . And this he is ready to verify wherefore he prays judgement if the said plaintiff ought to have or maintain his aforesaid action thereof against him.

Emmerson for Deft.

Pleas both traversed and issues joined in short hand by consent.

Douglas & Benedict
Stuart & Lincoln

Filed 4th June 1839
H. M. Gorin Clk

Affidavit for New Trial for Robert Hines
(This document is in the handwriting of
Stephen A. Douglas)

Macon Circuit Court June
Term 1839

David Adkins

vs

Robert Hines

Slander

David Adkins pltf being sworn states on oath that since a trial of this cause on yesterday he has discovered new testimony of the facts time of which he had no knowledge until since said trial was had and determined towit the testimony of George Query and Judith Oglesby who reside in the said county of Macon. This affiant expects to be able to prove and believes that he can prove by same witnesses that at the time he is charged to have stolen the hogs John G. Deeds towit on the 15th day of September 1838 this affiant was about twenty miles distant from the resident of said Deeds where said hogs or pigs are said to have been stolen towit that this affiant was in the Town of Decatur on that day and for five or six days before and after that day whereas those hogs are charged to have been stolen about twenty miles distant from Decatur & therefore that he could not have been guilty of said charge.

David Adkins

Filed 6th June
1839 H. M. Gorin Clk

Lincoln Letter to John Hanks
From *New Letters and Papers of Abraham Lincoln*
by Paul Angle

Springfield, Ill. Aug. 24. 1860

John Hanks, Esq

My dear Sir:

Yours of the 23rd is received — My recollection is that I never lived in the same neighborhood with Charles Hanks till I came to Macon county, Illinois, after I was twenty-one years of age — As I understand, he and I were born in different counties of Kentucky, and never saw each other in that State; that while I was a very small boy my father removed to Indiana, and your father with his family remained in Kentucky for many years — At length you, a young man grown, came to our neighborhood, and were at our house, off and on, a great deal for three, four or five years; and during the time, your father, with his whole family, except William, Charles, and William Miller, who had married one of your sisters, came to the same neighborhood in Indiana, and remained a year or two, and then went to Illinois — William, Charles, and William Miller, had removed directly from Kentucky to Illinois, not even passing through our neighborhood in Indiana. Once, a year or two before I came to Illinois, Charles, with some others, had been back to Kentucky, and returning to Illinois, passed through our neighborhood in Indiana. He stopped, I think, but one day, (certainly not as much as three); and this was the first time I ever saw him in my life, and the *only* time, till I came to Illinois, as before stated — The year I passed in Macon county I was with him a good deal — mostly on his own place, when

I helped him at breaking prarie [*sic*], with a joint team of his and ours, which in turn, broke some on the new place we were improving —

This is, as I remember it — Dont let this letter be made public by any means —

Yours very truly
A. Lincoln

Citations and Footnotes

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4. Facsimile of Howells' biography with marginal corrections in Lincoln's handwriting, published by Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois, 1938.
5. William E. Barton, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, I, footnote p. 139.
6. John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, I, p. 45.
7. Ehrmann, *The Missing Chapter in the Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 93.
8. Edwin David Davis, "Lincoln and Macon County, Illinois, (1830-1831)," *Journal of Illinois State Historical Society*, XXV April-July, 1932, pp. 69-71.
9. Whitney, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, p. 90.
10. The Indiana census of 1820 lists Dennis Hanks as twenty-one years old and one of the Thomas Lincoln household.
11. Edwin David Davis, "The Hanks Family in Macon County, Illinois, (1828-1939)," *Papers in Illinois History 1939*, Illinois State Historical Society, p. 133.
12. Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln: From the Letters and Papers of William H. Herndon*, p. 347.

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3. Lincoln short autobiography written in third person in 1860 for John L. Scripps.
4. *Decatur Review*, Decatur, Illinois, February 11, 1926. The interview with Hanks was written in 1885 but was not published until Thomas B. Shoaff used it in his Shelbyville, Illinois, paper in 1926 and republished it in the *Review*.
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15. *Ibid.*
16. Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 347.
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22. Coleman, *History of Decatur*, chap. 24.

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Chapter 3

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2. Lincoln's short autobiography (Scripps): "In the autumn all hands were greatly affected with ague and fever."
3. Smith, *History of Macon County*, pp. 32, 33.
4. Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 347.
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Chapter 4

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2. *Chicago Tribune*, May 29, 1865. Original of letter owned by Mrs. Mary Ellen Hanks Monon, daughter of John Hanks.
3. *The Voice Of The Fair*, Chicago, May 30, 1865.
4. *Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1865.
5. *The Voice Of The Fair*, Chicago, June 8, 1865.
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 11. *State Chronicle*, Decatur, Illinois, November, 1865.
 12. Ehrmann, *The Missing Chapter in the Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 46.

Chapter 5

1. Photostat of original document in author's possession.
2. All election figures in this chapter from *Illinois Election Returns 1818-1848*, Theodore Alvin Pease, editor, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois, 1923.
3. John W. Starr, Jr., *Lincoln and the Railroads*, p. 14.
4. Harry E. Pratt, *Lincoln Day by Day 1809-1839*, p. xlvi.
5. Harry E. Pratt, *Lincoln Day by Day 1840-1846*, p. x.
6. *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, September 26, 1844.

Chapter 6

1. Pratt, *Lincoln Day by Day 1809-1839*, pp. liv, lv.
2. *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Illinois, April 15, 1837.
3. Harry E. Pratt, *The Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 26.
4. Pratt, *Lincoln Day by Day 1809-1839*, pp. 62-113.
5. *Ibid.*, shown by day by day travel about circuit.
6. Jesse W. Weik, *The Real Lincoln: A Portrait*, p. 189.
7. Smith, *History of Macon County*, p. 43.
8. Macon County Circuit Court record, Book A, p. 100.
9. William E. Nelson, *History of Macon County*, I, 110.
10. *Decatur Herald*, February 7, 1909.

11. Macon County Circuit Court Record, Book A, p. 196.
12. Macon County Circuit Court record.
13. *Ibid.*, Case No. 203, Book A, p. 223.
14. Macon County Circuit Court record.
15. *Ibid.*, Book B, p. 32.
16. In a similar suit in Coles county in which Thomas McKibben sued Jonathan Hart for slander demanding \$2,000, McKibben was awarded \$200 and Lincoln was paid a fee of \$35. Sandburg: *Prairie Years*, I, 326.
17. Pratt, *The Personal Finances of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 26, 27.
18. Weik, *The Real Lincoln: A Portrait*, p. 191.
19. Pratt, *Lincoln Day by Day 1840-1846*, p. 32.
20. Jane Martin Johns, *Personal Recollections of Early Decatur, Abraham Lincoln, Richard J. Oglesby, and the Civil War*, p. 62.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 64. Piano story, pp. 64-66.
22. Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, I, 289.
23. Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*, I, 449.
24. Whitney, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln*, p. 53.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 55.
26. Weik, *The Real Lincoln: A Portrait*, p. 189.
27. *Illinois State Chronicle*, May 19, 1855.
28. Lamon, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 313.

Chapter 7

1. Paul M. Angle, *Lincoln Day by Day 1854-1861*, p. 112.
2. J. McCan Davis, *How Abraham Lincoln Became President*, p. 32.
3. Angle, *Lincoln Day by Day 1854-1861*, p. xvi.
4. Alexander Davidson and Bernard Stuve, *History of Illinois*, p. 642.
5. *Illinois State Chronicle*, April 14, 1855.
6. *Journal of Illinois State Historical Society*, V, No. 3, October 1912, pp. 343-344; see also *Decatur Herald*, June 9, 1912.

7. *All Morgan Journal* files up to 1858 were destroyed by fire.
8. Arthur Charles Cole, *The Era of the Civil War 1848-1870*, p. 127.
9. Davis, *How Abraham Lincoln Became President*, pp. 32, 33.
10. Nicolay in 1856 was editor of the *Pike County Free Press*, Pittsfield, Illinois, and endorsed the Decatur meeting.
11. Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, II, p. 23.
12. Herndon and Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln*, II, p. 372.
13. David Donald, *Lincoln's Herndon*, p. 77. Donald believes Herndon's account of this episode is open to "grave suspicion."
14. In the Lincoln-Douglas debate at Ottawa, August 21, 1858, Lincoln said: "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in States where it exists."
15. Yates MSS, Illinois State Historical Library.
16. Davis, *How Lincoln Became President*, p. 37.
17. Roy P. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, p. 335.
18. *Journal Illinois State Historical Society*, V, No. 3, October 1912.
19. *Chicago Tribune*, January 9, 1856.
20. *Ibid.*, February 14, 1856.
21. *Decatur Herald*, June 9, 1912.
22. Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858*, II, 358.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Ida M. Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 290.
25. Letter of March 18, 1856, to *Illinois State Journal*, Springfield, and republished in *Illinois State Chronicle*, Decatur, April 10, 1856.
26. The only existing file of the *Illinois State Chronicle* telling of the convention is in the possession of the *Decatur*

Herald and Review. It is scarred by fire but, with the exception of a few words, the story is now preserved on film as well as in the original publication.

27. Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 291, quoting from "an unpublished manuscript on the 'Formation of the Republican Party in Illinois' " written by Paul Selby.
28. Benjamin F. Shaw, MS, McLean County Historical Society Library, Bloomington, Illinois.

Chapter 8

1. The Great Western was under construction east from Decatur to the Illinois-Indiana state line. On December 6, 1855, the *Decatur State Chronicle* published this announcement: "On Monday week next, the Danville extension of the Great Western Railroad will be opened east from Decatur to Tolono, the crossing of the Chicago branch of the Illinois Central railroad. . . . We are not informed how soon the passenger trains will be put on the extension. . . ." In March, 1856, a Great Western time card printed in the Springfield, Illinois, *State Journal* carried this notation: "To Urbana after March 3, 1856" and "by stage to Homer, Danville, Covington, and Crawfordsville."
2. *Decatur Herald*, October 14, 1906.
3. Whitney, *Life On the Circuit with Lincoln*, pp. 90, 91.
4. *State Chronicle*, Decatur, May 15, 1856.
5. *Ibid.*, June 5, 1856.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Letter in Gen. John M. Palmer collection in Illinois State Historical Library.
8. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858*, II, 395.
9. *State Chronicle*, August 7, 1856.
10. *Ibid.*, September 11, 1856.
11. Angle, *Lincoln Day by Day 1854-1861*, p. 143.
12. *Ibid.*

Chapter 9

1. Johns, *Personal Recollections*, p. 67.
2. *Ibid.*, the farm was in Piatt county. Dr. Johns moved to Decatur in 1854 and into the house on Johns' Hill in 1857.
3. Angle, *Lincoln Day by Day 1854-1861*, Revised edition MSS in files of Abraham Lincoln Association, Springfield, Illinois.
4. Johns, *Personal Recollections*, p. 67.
5. *Illinois State Chronicle* (Daily), September 25, 1856.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Illinois State Chronicle* (Weekly), October 16, 1856, republished from *State Chronicle* (Daily) of October 11, 1856.
9. *Ibid.*

Chapter 10

1. Robert Todd Lincoln collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Library of Congress. (In microfilm, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Illinois.)
2. *Ibid.*
3. Angle, *Lincoln Day by Day 1854-1861*, p. 239.
4. Coleman, *Story of Decatur*, chap. 168.
5. Basler, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, p. 480.
6. *Decatur Herald*, February 7, 1909.

Chapter 11

1. *Chicago Press & Tribune*, February 10, 1860.
2. The call for the convention was issued by Jesse W. Fell, secretary of the State Central Committee, for the nomination of candidates for various state offices, select presidential electors, and delegates to the National Republican Convention in Chicago.

3. *Central Illinois Gazette* (West Urbana), February 15, 1860.
4. *Press & Tribune*, February 17, 1860.
5. Charles A. Church, *History of Republican Party in Illinois*, pp. 73, 74.
6. Davis, *How Lincoln Became President*, p. 59.
7. *Illinois State Journal*, May 7, 1860.
8. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1860.
9. *Press & Tribune*, May 10, 1860.
10. *Central Illinois Gazette*, May 16, 1860.
11. *Illinois State Journal*, May 10, 1860.
12. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1879. Reprint of John Moses' reminiscences in Winchester, Illinois, *Independent*.
13. *Ibid.*, May 26, 1879.
14. *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning, 1850-1864*, edited by Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, I, 405.
15. *Decatur Review*, November 28, 1908, reprint from Portland, Oregon, *Oregonian*. Joseph Gaston, newspaperman, coming to Illinois, was requested by an Ohio newspaper to attend the Decatur convention and make a report of the proceedings. Gaston also declared that Lincoln was not passed over the heads of the audience but came from behind the presiding officer's platform where he was seated with other distinguished Republicans before the convention opened.
16. *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning, 1850-1864*, p. 405.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 405.
19. *Press & Tribune*, May 10, 1860.
20. District 1, Thomas J. Turner; 2, William R. Plate; 3, D. L. Hough; 4, Richard H. Cullom; 5, William A. Grimshaw; 6, Stephen T. Logan; 7, H. P. H. Brownell; 8, Dr. F. A. Carpenter; 9, D. T. Linegar.
21. Convention officers were: President, Joseph Gillespie, Madison County. Vice presidents: Selden M. Church, Winnebago; Ira O. Wilkinson, Rock Island; John H.

- Bryant, Bureau; Henry Grove, Peoria; Benjamin F. Childs, Calhoun; James C. Conkling, Sangamon; N. M. McCurdy, Fayette; John Schell, St. Clair; James C. Jones, Gallatin. Secretaries: Dr. J. W. Willard, McLean; C. W. Mercer, Clinton; C. R. Judson, Stephenson; F. A. Dallam, Henderson; William Gagan, Livingston.
22. Lamon, *Life of Abraham Lincoln: From His Birth to His Inauguration*, pp. 444, 445.
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. The banner contained two errors. It was "John" Hanks instead of "Thos.," and Lincoln's father was not the "first" pioneer, there being 1,122 in Macon County when he arrived.
 25. *Press & Tribune*, May 10, 1860.
 26. *Illinois State Journal*, May 11, 1860.
 27. Tarbell, *In The Footsteps of The Lincolns*, p. 392.
 28. Davidson & Stuve, *History of Illinois*, footnote p. 703.
 29. *Decatur Review*, October 2, 1895.
 30. *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning*, I, 405.
 31. State candidates nominated were: for governor, Richard Yates of Morgan County; auditor, Jesse K. Dubois of Lawrence; secretary of state, Ozias M. Hatch of Pike; treasurer, William Butler of Sangamon; superintendent of public instruction, Newton Bateman of Morgan.
 32. *Illinois State Journal*, May 11, 1860.
 33. *Press & Tribune*, May 11, 1860.
 34. *Illinois State Journal*, May 26, 1879.
 35. Burrows interview, *Decatur Herald*, February 7, 1909.
 36. Isaac N. Phillips, *Abraham Lincoln By Some Men Who Knew Him*, pp. 62-68.

Chapter 12

1. James G. Randall, *Lincoln The President, Springfield to Gettysburg*, I, 178.
2. *Illinois State Journal*, August 9, 1860.
3. *Ibid.*, July 10, 1860.

4. Original in Lincoln Papers in Library of Congress; microfilm in Illinois Historical Library.

Chapter 13

1. Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln*, p. 350.
2. William E. Baringer, *A House Dividing; Lincoln as President Elect*, p. 267.
3. *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1861.
4. *Decatur Review*, August 26, 1900.
5. *Chicago Tribune*, February 12, 1861.
6. *New York Herald*, February 12, 1861; *Illinois State Journal*, February 12, 1861.
7. Spangler story: Coleman, *Story of Decatur*, chap. 125.
8. Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 411.
9. Clint Clay Tilton, *Lincoln's Last View of Illinois Prairies*.
10. *Ibid.*
11. William E. Baringer, *Lincoln's Rise to Power*, p. 266.

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- tions of *Abraham Lincoln*. Chicago, New York and San Francisco: Belford, Clarke & Company, 1889, 3 vols. Reprint Springfield: The Herndon's Lincoln Publishing Company, 1921.
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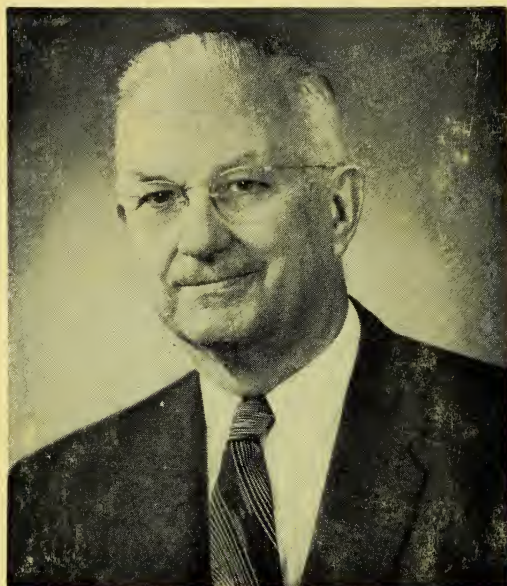
New York Times, New York, New York.



Lincoln and the city of Decatur are unforgettably linked. The tall, rawboned youth left his stamp on the growing town. For here, in days to come, a new political party in Illinois was to be launched—the Republican Party. Lincoln was present and almost immediately became its leader.

Young Lincoln split rails and helped his father build a cabin for their first Illinois home. The title “rail-splitter” conferred on him years later at the Republican State Convention held in Decatur was a compliment and an asset to the humble Abe, who expected only one hundred votes for the Presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention to be held in Chicago.

This book, written by a Decatur editor, is based on valuable source material. Free from romantic imaginings, it presents the true, factual story of Abraham Lincoln in Decatur, with a new approach to the time, the place, and the man.



About the Author

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